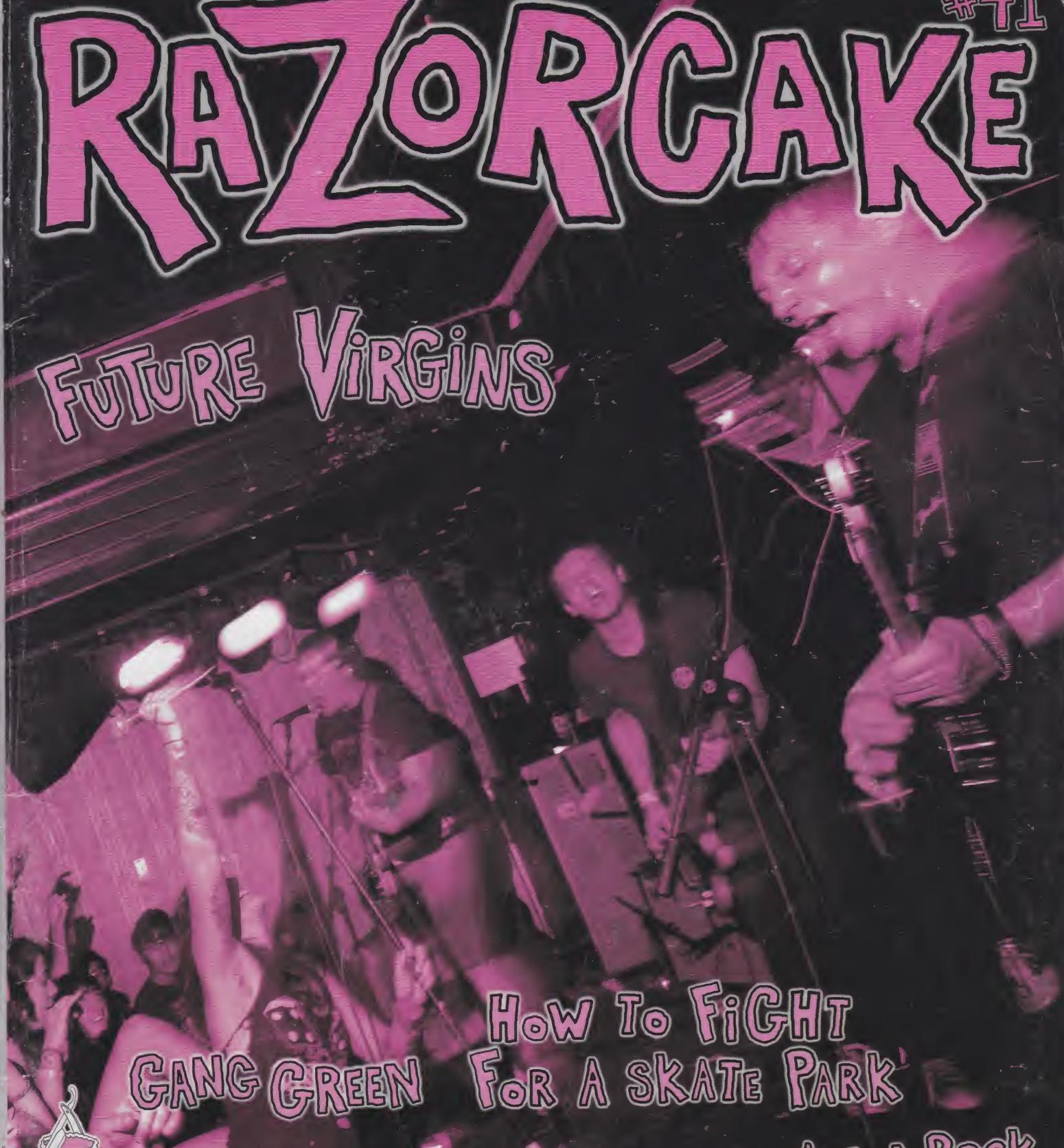


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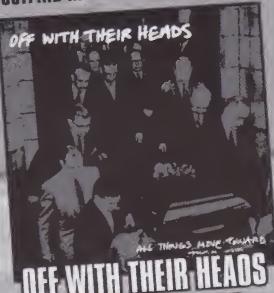
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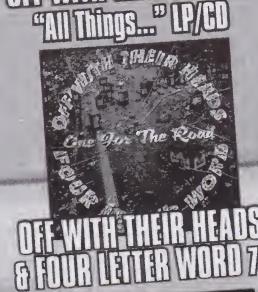
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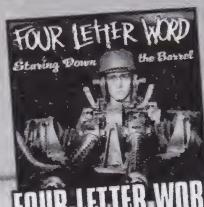
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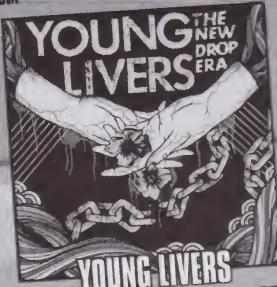
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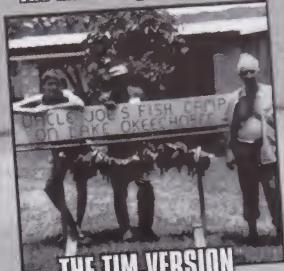
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Please enjoy this issue and thanks for the continued support.

—Todd Taylor

(RIP Heartattack and Status)

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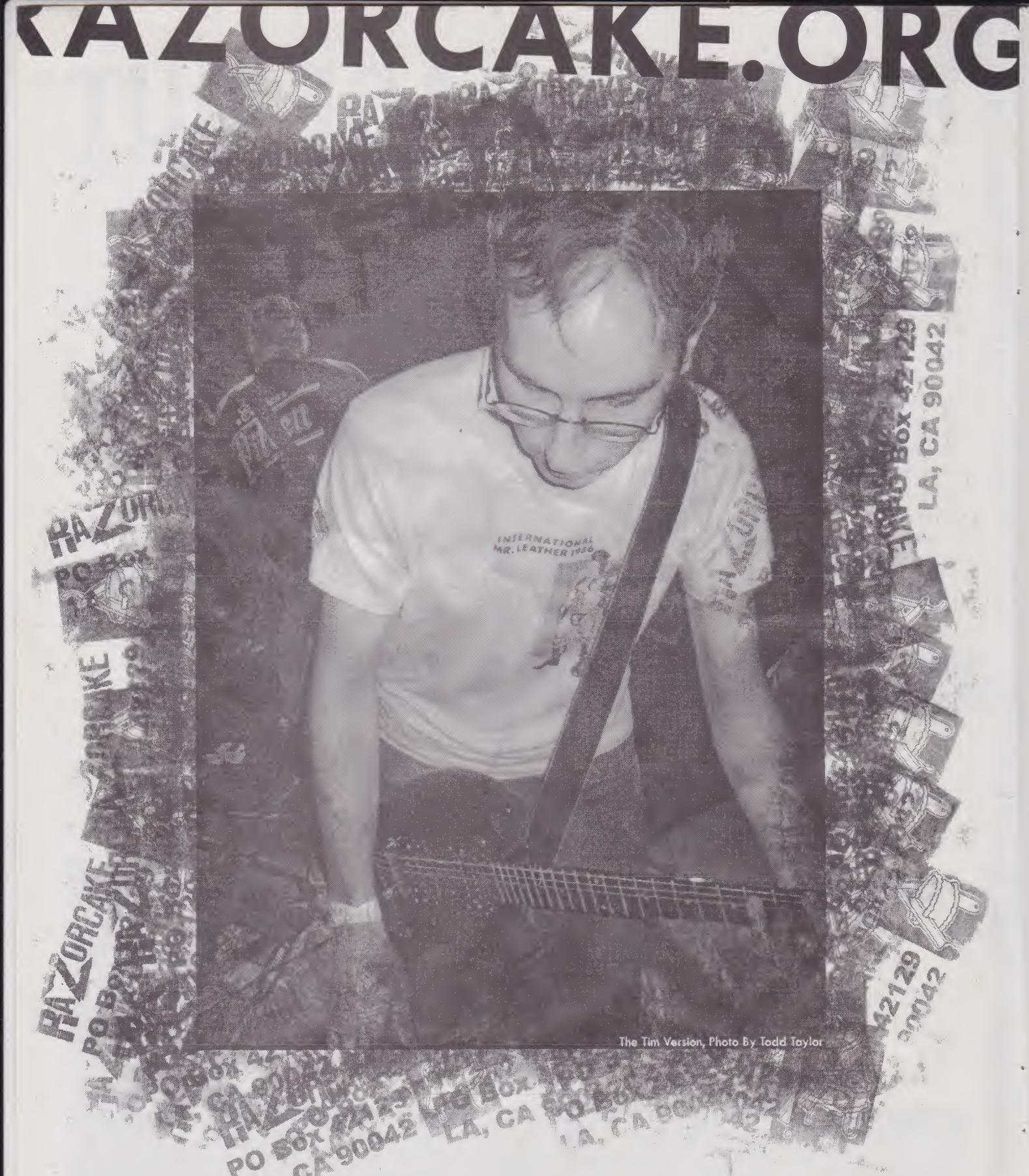
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The Tim Version, Photo By Todd Taylor

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## Porch Chatter

This is hard to explain without sounding like an asshole. In DIY punk rock, there is a dissolve between audience and band. Lower stages. Smaller price tags. Shared spaces. Bands who'll play in the middle of the crowd. Psychologically, this is healthy. It places some power with the beholder. Those who have traditionally been considered idols or gods are shrunken down to human size. There is space for discourse. This is good. This is progress. I like this.

But, there is a world of difference inside the inch or so—especially in DIY punk—from all the time, energy, and money it takes to display your creation, compared to showing up, walking in, popping off, and splitting. No, I'm not badmouthing the audience. Without an audience, the best one can hope for are rehearsals. Yet, somewhere along the line, someone got the idea that *any* commentary, *any* two cents worth, is sacrosanct, should be given equal time and weight to those who've put in literally thousands of hours of creative work.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not dismissing constructive criticism, long-time feedback, or suggesting an unwillingness to listen. *Razorcake* is in constant contact with hundreds of folks face-to-face; via email, and postal mail. We just don't print those dialogues for public commentary. It's intentional that there's no letters section in *Razorcake*.

Keep in mind that I'm not a Luddite with the next sentence. I blame the internet for the escalation of "I've got something to say, print it on your dime" entitlement mentality, the, "If you delete my post, that's censorship," line. Prior to the early '90s, when someone really wanted to talk shit remotely, nine times out of ten, there was a return address stamped on the envelope. They could be tracked. The world was a little bit smaller.

Words, written or said, should always be treated like they're spoken within punching distance. It makes you more honest.

### AD DEADLINES

#### ISSUE #42

December 1st, 2007

#### ISSUE #43

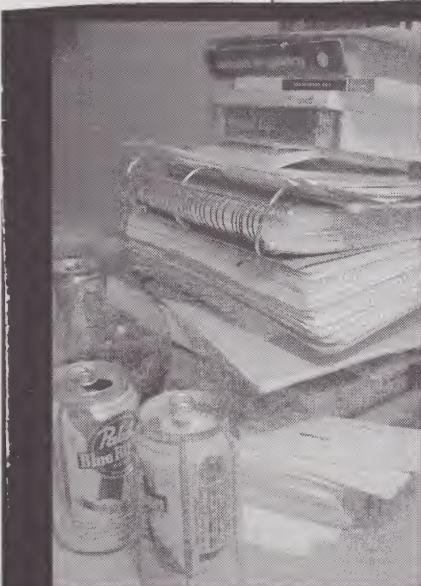
February 1st, 2008

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Cover photograph by Rob Stephen ([www.robstephen.com](http://www.robstephen.com)). That shit's copyrighted.  
Cover layout by Dave Disorder

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Lance Hahn. May you not be in any more pain.



Pabst and paperwork...

Two of *Razorcake's* invisible backbones.

photo by  
Will Kwiatkowski

But, with the internet—much like how citizens become more aggressive in cars than if they stand next to each other in the bus—people are cushioned from immediate consequences. Manners take a back seat. Digital aggression often masks human meekness and insecurity. With fewer constraints and consequences, the digital arm of punk has proven not to be more humane and powerful, but more vindictive and petty. Are those the first impulses? Anonymously talking shit, but in a highly public space where some ding dong can swoop down from cyberspace and call someone they've never met face-to-face a racist or a baby fucker or ripper-off-er (while the usual offense is making music that the listener disagrees with). With no evidence, just a degree in Righteous Indignation, these emoticon warriors can leave a byte-heavy bruise for the rest of the world to see—and for those incapable of critical thought—to believe.

"Yeah, bro, it's called 'democracy.' Go stand in line a couple hours for some stale bread, commie," you may be saying. "Welcome to the future." More and more often, when I'm on the interweb and end up reading about a band on a message board, it feels like I'm at a show where the drunk, slurring assholes in the audience are popping off to the band, convinced they're a rad mix of GG Allin and Red Foxx. And it's not just between the songs. These chatterboxes have mistaken themselves as the show.

My cure-all solution may sound disconnected, but it's easy and it works for me without fail. I just don't participate in the chatter. I turn off the computer, pull out a great book, plop a record on the turntable, go to a show, or invite some friends over. Those things always turn down that noisy ass-biting static.

Stick to your own knitting and you'll be amazed at how productive you can be.

—Todd Taylor

**THANK YOU:** Let's just assume that the lady taking the microphone wants to add some vocals to a rippin' song thanks to Dave Disorder and Rob Stephen for doing the cover layout and taking the picture of the Future Virgins, respectively; One hundred balloons and angels with bountiful, square dandruff thanks to Kris Trippelaar for his pic in Liz's column; the heart of the lord is really just a well-lit Tecate can thanks to Nuvia Crisol Guerra for her photo in Jim's column; Transistor radio IV into the arms of the elderly thanks to Gus for his illustration in Amy's column; "Hey, dude, can you draw someone with a broken light bulb in his head?" thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illustration in Gary's column; What's that word where people have sex with animals? thanks to "someone" for their picture in The Rhythm Chicken's column; The bat, an olive branch, and the dollar—work both for the Ramones and international finance thanks to Steve Larder for his illustration in Dale's column; Crazed. Dig up. Baby. Graveyard. Swaddle. Cry. Thanks to Maynard for his photo collage and "my balls are fine" thanks to Chris Nelson for his photo in Nardwuar's column; Just in case you're scared of the "Arena Rock Vs. Prog Rock" piece, rest assured that punk rock wins thanks to Mike Faloon for that article and Amy Adoyzie for the illustrations and layout; Hand grenades, shreds of hope, and knowledge flack jackets of thanks to Ryan Leach for the Christian Parenti interview and Keith Rosson for the layout and illustrations; It feels like I'm reciting a line from Logan's Run, thanking Gunther 8544 for the Electric Kisses interview; U.N. Bonz blows, go Joan Jett thanks to Mark Velasquez and August Heinrich for their photos in that interview; And the award to the band that loves Zima, wine coolers, uhmm beer! the most goes to... Gang Green, so thanks to Sean Koepnick for the interview, Nicole Tammaro for the pics, and Dave Disorder for the layout; "The fence is cut open over there," thanks to Mary-Clare Stevens for her photos in the "How to Fight for a Skatepark" piece, and for Amy Adoyzie for the layout; All of these folks helped proof this issue, but the computers are rebelling against us thanks to Emily Epstein, Shannyn Morse, Kurt Morris, Mary-Clare Stevens, and Adrian Salas; You make us look purty thanks to Chris Baxter for being a Photoshop wizard; The politics of reviewing material is a microcosm of the music "industry's" failures and shortcomings, yet is kick-ass for DIY thanks to following for their record, book, zine, and DVD reviews. Dave Williams, Mr. Z, Jessica T., Keith Rosson, Lord Kveldulf, Sean Koepnick, Donofthead, Ty Stranglehold, Kurt Morris, Mike Faloon, Adrian Salas, Art Ettinger, Joe Evans III, Bryan Static, Ben Snakepit, Norb, Sarah Shay, Corrine Gust, Dave Disorder, Josh Benke, Allan MacInnis, Mike Frame, Jimmy Alvarado, Stevo, Constantine Koutsoulis, Craven Rock, CT Terry, Lauren Trout, and Will Kwiatkowski; Thankfully, we've all had our shots kudos to Chris Devlin, Patricia Coleman, and Donofthegimmehead for helping pack, ship, and sort the last issue.

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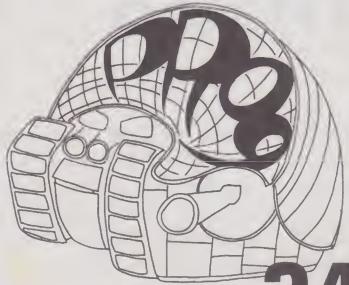
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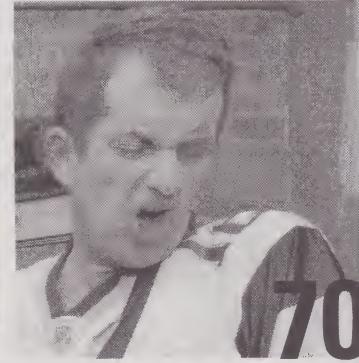
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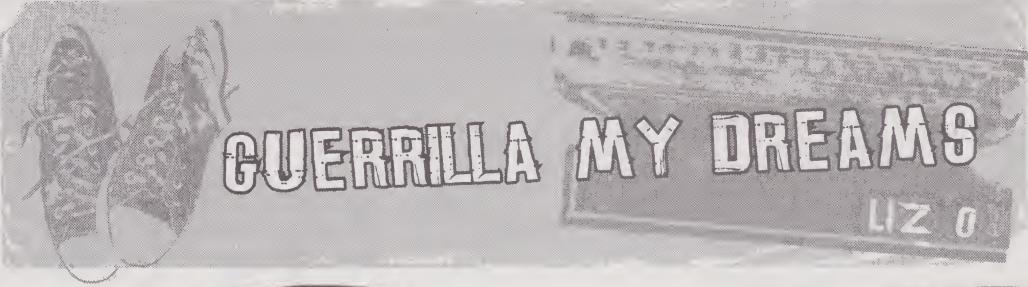
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"In order to get  
your intrepid report  
behind the wire  
fence, we had to  
be creative."

# Famous Tony

It was the third day of the Coachella festival and, sometime when the sun was at its most blazing, I ended up waiting around the press area for the Hot British Band with whom I had secured an interview. A half hour had passed since our designated meeting time. Every thirty seconds or so, I would look at the screen of my phone, wondering if maybe someone called but I couldn't hear it over the press tent chatter mixed with the only slightly dissipated sound of the band at the nearest stage.

Finally, someone called. Hot British Band wanted to do the interview inside a back stage trailer. I understood this. It was barely below Saharan temperatures outside and the press area, which doubled as the VIP area, had accumulated enough star fuckers to ward away anyone who might actually be a very important person. For the band, this was an ideal situation. For me, it posed a huge problem. How would I get backstage without a pass?

The first thing you learn as a music journalist is that a press pass is not the same as a backstage pass. This is generally not a huge issue on account of the fact that, in most cases, any band or manager can successfully coerce security to let you, the journalist, backstage for the twenty minutes or so it will take to conduct the interview that no one ever wants to do amidst the crowd. Things change, though, at Coachella, where security is abnormally strict and a backstage pass is the sort of prize even a celebrity can't always score. In order to get your intrepid report behind the wire fence, we had to be creative.

The handler for Hot British Band had a smashing idea. She would borrow a wristband from someone who was not planning on leaving the premise anytime soon. I would wear the odd piece of fabric for the duration of the interview and then return it after we had finished. It was perfect.

My contact and I finally located each other, somewhere between a line of fake bathrooms and one of the two backstage entrances. She met me with someone else who may or may not have been part of Hot British Band's entourage and handed me the wristband.

The wristband looked like the bracelets my friends and I made by the armload at summer

camp, no fewer than ten pieces of thick string wrapped and knotted around each other to form a few blocks of desert-friendly color with the word "backstage" cutting through the center. The wristband was tied to fit the size of a wrist much larger than my own. I slipped it over my hand without problem and wrapped the excess through another bracelet so that it wouldn't fall. We walked together through the entrance as I acted like I really belonged here.

The wristband belonged to Tony, said one of my escorts.

"Famous Tony?" asked the other.

"Yes, Famous Tony," was the answer.

They giggled and I tried to discern if Famous Tony was in fact someone famous or someone who somehow earned such a nickname. From the conversation, it seemed that Tony really was someone of note, but I couldn't pick up enough information to make any sort of judgment and didn't want to risk asking the potentially stupid question, "Who is Famous Tony?"

We walked around and in between the white metal rectangular blocks that comprised this make-shift rock and techno trailer park. Each temporary abode featured a small version of a front yard, where the bands congregated to drink and smoke and get some sun. In front of Hot British Band's trailer was a small group of mostly musicians, mostly people I recognized from photos in Hot British Magazines. My escorts introduced me to everyone, ending the round of "pleasure to meet you" quips with the man who provided my backstage pass.

"This is Tony."

Famous Tony shook my hand and spoke just enough to convey a British accent.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," I said in a tone that was genuine without seeming to convey the fact that I was almost certain that I knew exactly who Famous Tony was and that knowledge was about enough to make me shriek on the inside.

My suspicion was that Famous Tony was actually Tony Wilson, the founder of Factory Records and Manchester's legendary but now-defunct Hacienda nightclub. However, after seeing *24 Hour Party People*, the movie based on the history of Factory and the Hacienda, a few years ago, I couldn't hear or think the name Tony Wilson without seeing Steve

Coogan, the British comedian who played the impresario in the film. The television journalist who was so enthralled by punk that he launched an indie empire was now forever scrawled in my mind as a guy with a grin that screams "Smack me!" who didn't seem to let anyone forget that he went to Cambridge. This man seated next to me was roughly the same age as my parents with a distinguished air about him. He was cordial, although he seemed a bit weary, like the heat had proved itself bothersome.

I never asked him if he was Tony Wilson. There were too many people around and I thought I might look foolish if he was someone else or even worse if my assumption was correct. I just stood at the base of a small set of stairs quietly waiting for my interview.

Ever since I first learned about Tony Wilson, I wanted to interview him. Without his label, some of my favorite records—Joy Division's entire catalog, New Order's *Power, Corruption & Lies* and *Low-Life*, Happy Monday's *Thrills 'n' Pills and Bellyaches*, James' earliest releases—might not exist. And the Hacienda was legendary, something mentioned in those Hot British Magazines that cost a teenager's full-hour wage, something that made me dream of Manchester instead of London as the foreign getaway in my mind. But, it wasn't just that. Tony Wilson was known for speaking in extremes. In his mildest moments, he either loved or hated something. Much of his well-documented sentiments about music, though, were fueled by much stronger emotions. For a journalist, he was a dream subject.

But, I wasn't here to interview Tony Wilson. Instead, I entered the trailer and spent twenty minutes or so with Hot British Band. When I left, I stopped by the Famous Tony, slipped off the wristband, handed it to him, and said thank you. Then I attempted to slip back through the gate, but was promptly apprehended by a security guard who handed me to another security, who took my driver's license and refused to give it back to me. Then he drove me to the front of the concert, the parking lot exit, and I sat there arguing with him for fifteen minutes until I convinced him that I just happened to make a wrong turn while text messaging someone as I walked

through the press area after an interview. All of this was actually true, I just sort of left out the part about being backstage for the interview. He brought me back to the press area, kindly returned my driver's license and warned a third security guard that I "claimed" to be a journalist and was never to be allowed in the vicinity of that gate again.

I couldn't even speak. I had spent what felt like days showing this guy my press credentials and the interview that I had just done as proof and he had the nerve to say that I "claimed" to be a journalist. Did I just make up all those thick English accents on the tape?

With my already strong aversion towards authority figures increased to the extent that I now felt an intense burning sensation in my stomach, I left the press area and walked towards the stages, where I ran into no fewer than three of my friends and rehashed the story, "How Liz Almost Got Kicked out of Coachella," with the subtitle switching from its intended "Did Liz Meet Tony Wilson?" to "Yet Another Reason Security Guards Suck"

Famous Tony had left my mind until later on that evening, when I met with my friends Amy and Miko in one of the dance tents to see Happy Mondays. Tony Wilson came out to introduce the band, speaking in terms that might be construed as hyperbole by the average

concertgoer, but were viewed as "Classic Tony" by my Factory-obsessive friends and me. He stood with a cane and wore white, but, from my vantage point looked similar enough to leave me floored. I text messaged my boyfriend, "I think I accidentally met Tony Wilson." Then I leaned over to Amy and whispered, "You aren't going to believe what happened this afternoon."

After I returned to Los Angeles, I told my boyfriend, Carlos, the story in vague terms, like even I wasn't sure if it happened. Throughout the course of my life, it has become a point of fact that I have an overactive imagination, that simple stories involving seemingly uneventful walks down the street become the stuff of myth. Back in Los Angeles, away from the mind-sucking rays of sun, I had resigned myself to the belief that Famous Tony was a figment of my imagination. Yes, he did look like the guy on stage, but he was wearing a different outfit and carrying a cane. To be fair, though, the guy I met was seated, so I didn't know if he had a cane or not, but, at this point, even I didn't believe myself.

"Why don't you just Google his picture?" asked Carlos.

I tried to explain to him that by Googling the picture, I would either learn that I had imagined the greatest accidental meeting of my life or that I did meet this person that I

greatly admired and screwed it up by not thanking him for the music.

Months passed and I let the story rest in the back of my mind. No one but Carlos and Amy knew what happened and I intended to keep it that way. Then, on some lark, I decided that I might as well Google Tony Wilson. I looked up the most recent photos and called Carlos. After that, the tale "How Liz Accidentally Met Tony Wilson before Accidentally Almost Getting Kicked out of Coachella" became fodder for smoking patios across the L.A. club scene.

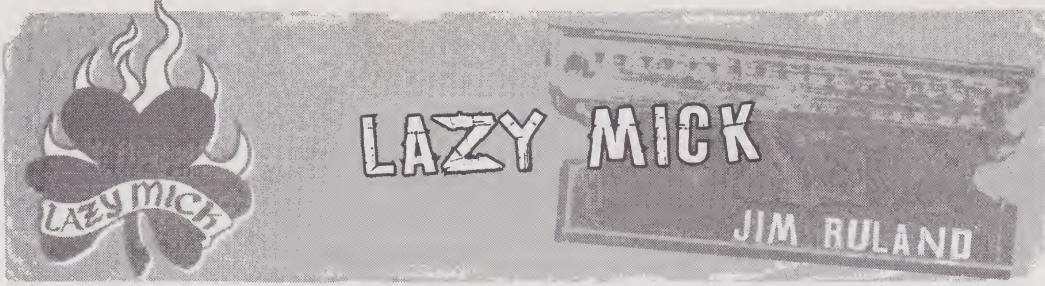
Two weeks after I determined the identity of Famous Tony, he passed away, following a bout with kidney cancer. The news traveled fast and, that weekend, it seemed as though every club in Los Angeles had put together some sort of tribute to the man who released "Blue Monday," perhaps the biggest club hit of the post-disco generation. At Underground, where I had headed out the Friday night after the news broke, the DJs played a half-hour block of Factory releases and the dance floor was packed the entire time. It was a nice way for everyone who either never had or didn't take the chance, to say thank you for the music.

-Liz Ohanesian

**Throughout the course of my life, it has become a point of fact that I have an overactive imagination, that simple stories involving seemingly uneventful walks down the street become the stuff of myth.**

Photo by Kris Tripplaar





"I wanted to know 'why' but settled for 'how' and got a forensics report instead."

# Carried Away

I found out my music teacher killed himself when I came home from a Bruce Springsteen concert at RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C.

I hated Bruce Springsteen, but my best friend bought me a ticket as a birthday present. I didn't want to go, but Steve insisted we'd have a good time. His brother worked as a bar back at the Knights of Columbus and he'd filled up some two-liter bottles of Sprite with jug wine. Steve had a van and told me he'd invited a pretty girl from the neighborhood named Betty who had an easy reputation.

Our seats were in the last row of the upper deck of the stadium. I couldn't see Bruce, not on the stage, nor on the screen; but by the end of the night I'd slapped a *Born in the USA* sticker my forehead and was drooling into Betty's D-cups while slurring the words to "Pink Cadillac."

When I came home that night, my father was waiting for me with the bad news. He stood in the living room in a T-shirt and underwear, otherwise the house was dark and quiet. My mother worked nights as the head nurse at a detox unit at the hospital. At first I thought I was busted for boozing and being out late, but there was something in my father's tone that told me something was wrong.

"Alan killed himself."

My father was a naval officer; apprehension wasn't in his vocabulary, but he was oozing with it now.

I asked for answers. We can't stop ourselves from asking. "Alan killed himself" is a simple sentence but a complex story. I wanted to know "why" but settled for "how" and got a forensics report instead.

My father explained in as few words as possible that my music teacher, a man who'd been coming to our house for years to give me and my siblings music lessons, had killed his mother and barricaded himself inside her house until the police arrived, and when they did, he put his mouth around the barrel of a shotgun and pulled the trigger.

I don't remember if my father hugged me or not. He was certainly capable of it, but he was a clumsy hugger and I'd been drinking and didn't want to give myself away. I know he asked me if I was all right. I said I was and went down the stairs to my basement bedroom, crawled into bed, and drifted off with my thoughts alternating between Betty and Alan.

When I talked to my mother about Alan's suicide the next day, she tried to convince me that it had been an accident. He'd gotten into an argument with his mother, she postulated, and lashed out at her without meaning to hit her. I think she was trying to make me feel better, but it only made me feel worse. I still hadn't broken free of the grip that Catholicism had on me. *Everything* made me feel guilty and to think of Alan, bunkered in his house, wracked with guilt over what he'd done, was as perfect a vision of hell as I could dream up.

It was hard to imagine Alan killing anything. He wore glasses and a beard and had long straight hair that he kept in a pony tail. If you saw him you would think two words: "Renaissance Fair." He taught traditional Irish music and knew thousands of songs on the penny whistle, some of which only a handful of folks knew how to play. He wasn't just a talented musician; he was an archive unto himself.

My parents loved Irish music. My father talked one of his buddies into rigging the whole house with sound so it was not unusual to wake up on weekend mornings to Irish rebel songs.

My parents thought it would be fun to learn how to play the Irish music they loved so well. The Ruland clan was already enrolled in Irish dance lessons, so it made sense to sign us up for music lessons, too. Shortly after we started, the venue where the music lessons were held shut down. My parents offered up our house and soon every other Wednesday night Irish music could be heard throughout the house. My mother took fiddle lessons, my brother fancied the concertina, and my sisters and I took up the tin whistle. My father, when he was around, served drinks.

At the end of the night, all of the teachers and students gathered in the family room in the basement and played together in a crude ceili, which is a kind of jam session. Sometimes we weren't half bad. I still remember the names of the songs: "Galway Bell," "Dick Gossip's Reel," "Mickey Chewing Bubble Gum." Every once in a while the songs of my childhood turn up on a record by the Tossers, Dropkick Murphys, or Blood Or Whiskey.

One of the teachers moved away. Another lost his wife. The students drifted off. Only Alan kept coming back. My brothers and sisters and I neglected our lessons and made

damn poor progress on our instruments. In all the years that he came over to our house, I only managed to learn a handful of tunes, no more than a dozen or two. Waltzes and marches mostly. A few slow reels and hornpipes, but nothing too complicated. I practiced when my mother forced me to in the hour before Alan was scheduled to arrive. Sometimes it took a month to learn a single song and I never did manage to learn how to read music. If Alan was disappointed he never showed it, but deep down I knew that he was.

Alan's patience wasn't what made him so remarkable to me. He was the only person I could talk to about the fantasy and science fiction novels I loved to read. My parents worried that I read too much "weird stuff" and my siblings thought I was a freak. Looking back, I understand their concern. I was hooked on Tolkien, Howard, Lovecraft and Moorcock. Strange names for strange stories and their covers featured lurid images of monsters, blood, and tits.

But Alan understood. He talked to me as if I was an adult and not some hunchbacked misanthrope. I don't remember him saying much, but talking to him validated the choices I didn't realize I was making at the time, but when you're fourteen and walking around school carrying huge hardcover copies of books filled with magic and monsters, you're most definitely making a choice. Alan knew this, knew what I was going through, and I loved him for it, albeit in the shameful way of an adolescent who was seldom comfortable in his own skin. Then police at the door, brains on the floor, my music teacher was a murderer.

Although it does no one any good to speak ill of the dead, I imagine Alan's mother as a shrewish woman who mistook her son's gentleness for passivity and told him things he did not want to hear. Sometimes it's preferable to imagine that he killed her on purpose because this version spares him the agonizing guilt he must have felt as he waited in his dead mother's house for two days before the cops showed up; but I know this is a lie.

Alan said exactly two things that have stayed with me. The first, "A bare breasted maiden or two never hurt anybody," in response to my complaint that my mother wouldn't let me see R-rated *Conan the Barbarian*. The second came after I asked

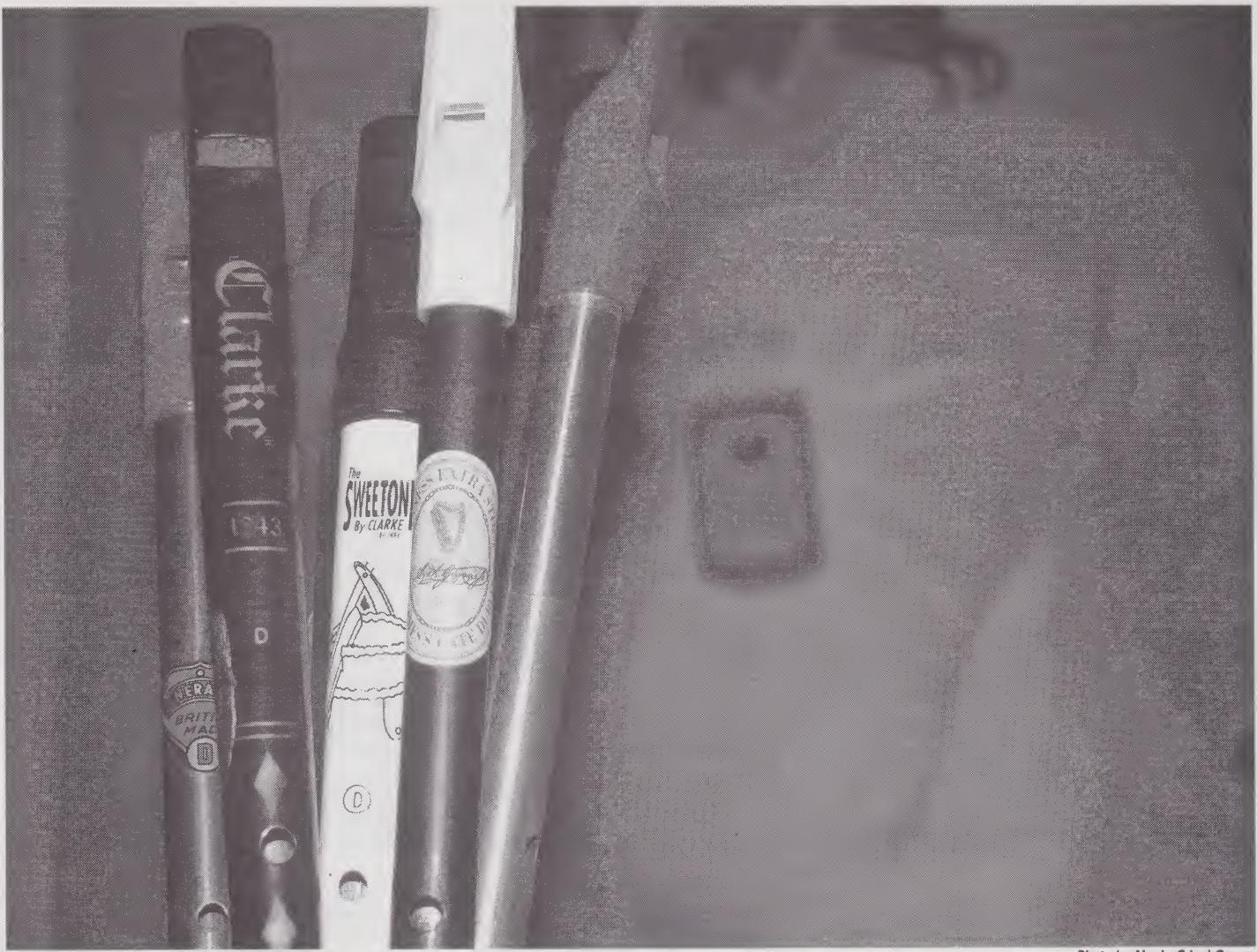


Photo by Nuvia Crisol Guerra

# I'd sit on Grafton Street and ask pretty girls if they wanted to hear a yank play the tin whistle.

Alan to be my confirmation sponsor, and was shocked to learn that he wasn't a Catholic. I assumed that all Irish musicians were Catholic. He told me he was a secular humanist and when he could see that I plainly didn't understand what he was saying, he added, "I love my fellow man not because God tells me to, but because he's worth loving." In light of what happened, was Alan worth loving?

The tin whistle is a funny little instrument. It looks like a child's toy but is incredibly complex. They're only about ten or eleven inches long, but have incredible range. A fast reel on a tin whistle will get your feet tapping, but a slow air can be devastating.

My tin whistle lessons served me well the first time I went to Dublin and ran out of money. I'd sit on Grafton Street and ask

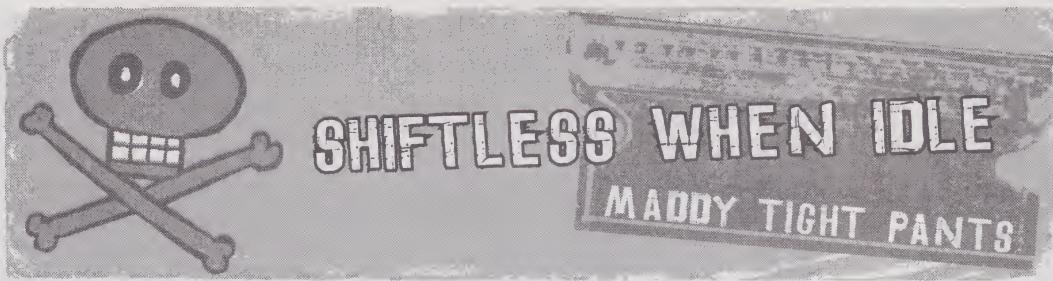
pretty girls if they wanted to hear a yank play the tin whistle. It was usually good for a few pence or a cigarette and helped introduce me to the local street punks busking for change. A man who'd just gotten out of The Maze—the now defunct prison in Northern Ireland for political prisoners—sat down with us and asked to borrow my whistle. He wiped the mouthpiece on his pants and played the saddest song I'd ever heard, a song filled with trills and fills that were the equivalent of a bird freezing to death on a winter branch. His performance stopped traffic and when he was done there wasn't a dry eye on the block.

I keep tin whistles around the house. I pick them up in my travels. Most of them are from Ireland. Some are old and have been played so often that the finish has worn off around the holes. Others have cracked

mouthpieces. I don't play very often, and never for very long. My repertoire is limited but sometimes if I play the songs at different speeds (very slow and very fast) I can trick myself into thinking I know more than I do.

I put the whistle in my mouth, distribute the weight evenly between my teeth and lips. I place the pads of my fingers on the instrument and the metal is cool to the touch. I close my eyes and play. I don't worry if the notes are true or if my breath falters; I don't care if anyone's listening. For a moment, a small but vital part of Alan is alive inside the music and it carries me away.

—Jim Ruland



"Where fetuses linger for nine months in a pool of urine, and mankind has lost all hope of eating seafood."

# Stereotypes of Stupidity

Attention ivory tower academics, readers of James Joyce, and assorted intellectual miscreants! Avert your glance because what follows is a tragic tale of the failure of the very educational endeavor itself! A tale so gruesome that it can only now be told! Yes, it is true. Ms. Tight Pants has gone back to school!

For most people, this might mean taking some classes, writing some papers, and complaining about exams. However, since I seem to have the remarkable ability to attract all things ridiculous (and/or stupid), what follows is not your ordinary jaunt through the halls of higher learning. Indeed, what follows is what happens when an aging punk rocker jumps into the lion's den itself and wrestles with the, um, lions.

I searched, I pictured myself dissecting a pig and being unable to properly identify the femur, and thus being doomed to a grad-school-less world of devastation and despair. I continued scrolling down the list, sadly envisioning my fate and imagining the conversation: "Yes, she worked at a cereal-themed amusement park. It was funny when she was twenty-one, but now that she's twenty-eight, it's just, well, sad." Thoughts of myself limping around portraying an elderly Lucky the Leprechaun clouded my vision, and I could barely continue reading through my list of options.

And then, I found it. The Biology of Women! A clearly bullshit class lurking amongst non-bullshit classes so as to

It all started on the first day of class. A girl came in wearing Apple Bottom jeans, made famous by some rapper I can't remember. I, in fact, own a pair of these jeans, because they have apples on the back pockets and are super insanely tight (punk rock!). I initially felt a certain affinity with her. I thought that perhaps she was one of those sneaky, difficult-to-detect punk rockers! The ones who fail to sport Punk Rock Identification (PRI) at all times, forcing you to interpret the finer ambiguities lurking in their pink Converse shoes! And then she started talking.

The instructor had just begun a nondizzily simple explanation of muscles. In fact, I think the only information she

"Yes, she worked at a cereal-themed amusement park. It was funny when she was twenty-one, but now that she's twenty-eight, it's just, well, sad."

It all started when I read the fine print on the Master's of Social Work application. I needed to take two prerequisites to enroll. One was statistics, and the other was "a biology class." Upon realizing that I had to take two math/sciency classes, I reviewed my personal history of failure in both endeavors, and decided that the logical step would be to take the classes at a.) the easiest possible college and b.) the cheapest possible college. Surprise! Surprise! This ended up being the same place.

The next step was to find the easiest possible biology class. I scanned the choices: biology 101, anatomy, biochemistry... As

obscure it! Like a pop punk girl hiding in the middle of a Crass sing-along basement party! A hidden gem in a world full of pig femurs! (Note: Do pigs even have femurs?) I enrolled quickly and with great enthusiasm, envisioning a science class so easy even I could pass it.

I should preface this by saying that, as perhaps evidenced above, I am a complete and total idiot. I am comfortable with my own brand of idiocy, which tends to involve the inability to locate directions or solve simple math problems. But, as I was to learn, there was a subtype of stupidity not even I possessed! Yes, there are several people who have even more tenuous grips on reality than myself!

had (correctly) deemed that we would be able to understand was: Humans have muscles. Muscles help us. After I committed this to memory, I looked up and my Apple-Bottomed friend had raised her hand. Perhaps she was going to bring up a comparison between the muscles of Dischord Records bands and the muscles of NY Hardcore kids, provoking a lively debate of good muscles vs. bad muscles! Perhaps she was going to briefly touch on the lack of muscles in the power pop explosion of the 1970s, and the implications this had for Lookout Records bands two decades later! I awaited her question with eager anticipation. And then she asked, "Is it bad to eat mussels then?"

The instructor looked confused. The girl continued, "Because, you know, should you really *eat* your own muscles?" Ack! Ack! Ack! I am dumb, but even I understand that two things can be pronounced the same, and yet, not be the same thing. Sadly, my friend did not realize this, and proceeded to debate this point with the instructor for *at least* ten minutes, despite the instructor's attempts to resolve the issue by writing out the two words on the board and noting the different spellings.

After this had finally been resolved, or, more honestly, a sort of detente had been reached, with neither side willing to attempt defeat, we continued. Over the next several minutes, I learned that humans are made of cells. And that cells help us. Growing increasingly comfortable with the rigorous intellectual level of the class, I started making a list of my top ten favorite songs as a way to interject some math into the equation! In the middle of writing down, "Broken Home Broken Heart," the same girl raised her hand again. The instructor had just explained that sweat was good. And yes, sweat helps us! Everyone moved forward a little in their seats, wondering what would happen. Then came the question: "Is it harmful to wipe off sweat?" In this situation, I think the smart move on the part of the instructor would be to respond, "WAIT! ARE YOU SERIOUS? Have you been wiping your sweat off for all these years?" Sadly, she simply said that this, in fact, was irrelevant.

The conversation moved towards the female reproductive system. The instructor showed a basic slide of female genitalia, and was quickly going through the basics. Here is the vagina. Here is the urethra. And then, a question from our friend. "So, wait. Those come out of different holes?"

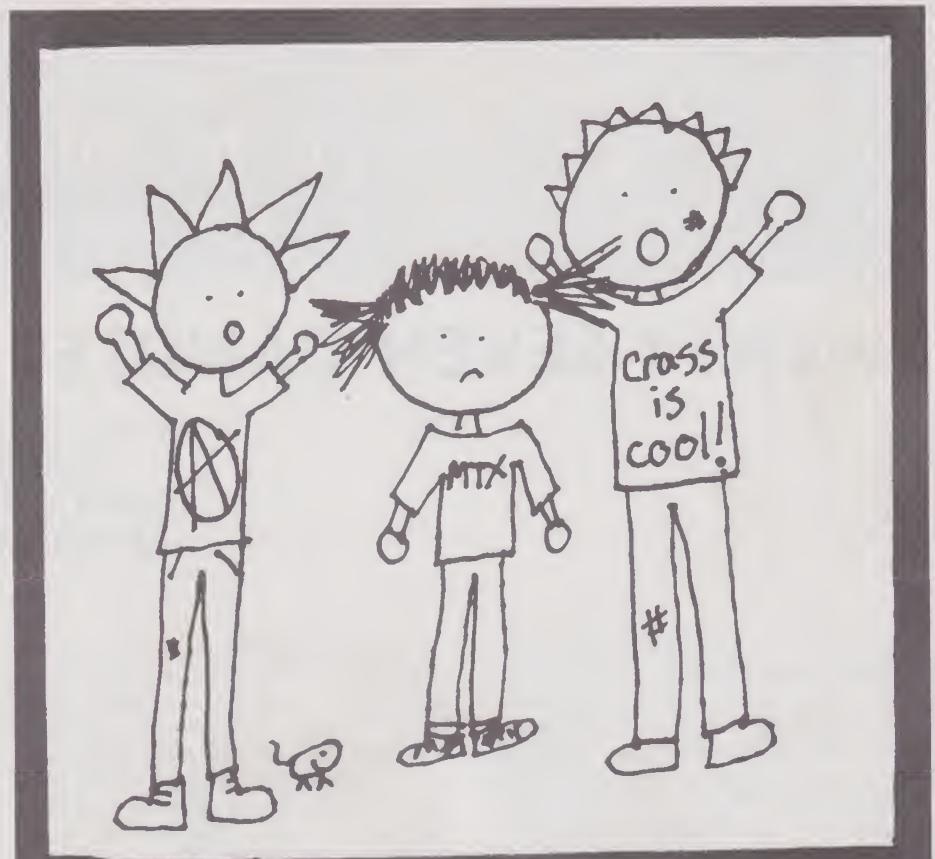
I sat at my desk and tried to envision a world where these questions made sense. A world where humans eat their own bodies and showering post-bike ride could have fatal implications. A world where pee and periods intermingle in some sort of nightmarish biological disaster. A frightening, vile world, where fetuses linger for nine months in a pool of urine, and mankind has lost all hope of eating seafood.

While I was busy pondering these grisly details, another student announced that she accidentally bought an extra textbook and needed to sell one. She wrote her number on the board. The Apple-Bottomed girl, looking confused, raised her hand and asked, "Is that phone number going to be on the test?"

The End!

-Maddy

P.S. Please send Replacements mix tapes, candy, and Apple Bottom jeans to me, c/o Razorcake!





"When my chest  
aches... it's not  
heartburn but stifled  
excitement from  
waiting for the next  
Reigning Sound record."

# MONSTER OF FUN

AMY ADOYZIE

## TWENTY-SEVEN CANDLES

Or

I AM, INDEED, YOUNGER THAN REV.  
NØRB AND SHALL HENCEFORTH  
REFRAIN FROM WRITING COLUMNS  
ABOUT AGING BECAUSE THAT DUDE  
IS WAY OLD.

It must be tough being a kid these days.

What with e-predators on the internet stalking their virtual minor butts, pseudo-celebrities like Nicole Richie permeating every media outlet for no good reason, or having to admit that the president of our country wasn't actually necessarily voted into office. We're living in a time where everything is so erroneously fake, that it's real. They're hopped up on whatever the latest sports drink and fast food extreme taco that's being marketed towards them. Since they were old enough to receive an allowance, they've been told to consume as much as possible in an effort to save Mother Earth and look hella sexy while doing it. I can't imagine being a teenager, hormones raging through their adolescent bodies every which way and trying to make sense of their place in this (sur)reality. That's probably why so many of them are dicks.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a quarter past eight and I was late for Trivia Night at the Pub. I was dressed down in a puffy red knit cardigan and blue Velcro sneakers as I shuffled around the block from our house to the bar. After cutting through the gas station on the corner of SE 39<sup>th</sup> and Gladstone, three teenage boys decked out in oversized grey hoodies and droopy dark shorts trudged behind me. Their shoulders slumped forward with each step in an exaggerated suburban hustler stroll, trying so desperately to emulate their hip-hop heroes as seen on (M)TV.

"Hey, baby, what's yo name?" One of them hollered in my general direction.

I turned slightly, furrowed my brow and kept moving forward.

"Oh never mind," he scoffed. "You *old*."

Hold it. Wait an effin' minute. Wuzzah?!

"That's some shit to say!" I shouted back before rushing into the bar to tell my friends about how I just got called out for being geriatric.

RAZORCAKE 12

Did I miss something? Am I unaware of the latest trends in the evolution of the modern teenager? Have all their young bodies soaked up too much radiation from cell phones and lead-tainted toys from China? Is that why they have zoom night vision shooting out from their fresh eyes and can see all the fine lines on my freckled face? Perhaps these young ones possess *old-lady ESP* and can tell just from looking at me that I was born before the NES was invented and I grew up with the 8-bit version of those Italian plumber brothers? Gus says it's possible that the kids know what grammars smell like.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maybe it's the extra syllable.

Leading up to it, it had always been just a tri-syllabic word. Twen-ty-two, twen-ty-five, twen-ty-six.

But now a slight blip slips out when I say my age. Twen-ty-se-VEN. Saying it out loud makes me weary. Like that *ven* is the weight of all those late nights in smoky grey bars nursing *just one more beer*, bloating my belly and the bags under my eyes.

I've never been particularly concerned about aging because I feel like a perpetual nineteen-year-old obsessed with crushing on Greg Cartwright and collecting passport stamps since I'm not beholden to adult responsibilities. Even as time passes and I'm aware that I'm growing older each day, there have only been a few occasions where I felt legitimately old. Usually it's at a show where I'm elbowing for space with high school kids or suggesting that they keep their pants on when they discuss taking them off. But for the most part, I'm lucky to not be afflicted with a case of the crabby-oldies or arthritis (yet). I can still sweat it out, smile and dance until the band has strummed its last chord. When my chest aches with a faint tenderness, it's not heartburn but stifled excitement

from waiting for the next Reigning Sound record. I'm not plagued with the crippling fear that I've fucked up my life because I haven't nestled into the comfort of stability or settling down.

When mom was my age, she was still a fairly new immigrant with three kids to watch after in a foreign country where she didn't speak the language and knew nothing of the culture. But me, well, I don't even bother with taking care of houseplants. She was responsible for three little lives and all I've been doing lately is getting giddy over boys and thinking up stories to write.

It's both satisfying and insulting to know that when the kids talk about "all them old peoples," that I'm probably clumped in that group. Little do they know that on my twenty-seventh birthday I received a gift of a mix tape from a boy: clearly a move that has its deep roots in teenagedom. It was an actual cassette tape with ninety minutes of some of the best punk bands around today. The kids can snicker at my new syllable, but I won't hear them because I'm listening to my new mix tape.

\* \* \* \* \*

I spent my birthday as any self-respecting twenty-seven-year-old kid would: I went to a show and let all my friends buy me beer. We jiggled and swayed, and didn't have to worry about getting home before curfew or doing homework. Another advantage about being of age is being able to drink outside of your backyard. I was all kinds of inebriated, to the point where I may have said and done things that my age-addled memory does not recall, like the following, retold to me by Keith.

As we waited at the bar, I gyrated against Keith and asked, "You got a boner?"

"No..." he replied.

"cause if you do," I said. "You've got five seconds to stick it in me."

Whoa. Even I'm floored I said that.

Later that night, Anna's Jager shot put me over and I was near passed out in the bar bathroom while Adam stroked my head as I rested in his care against the toilet I just puked into. My friends, as gracious as they were, propped me up and led me out to the sidewalk where I showered Sachi's shoes with regurgitated booze. She wasn't even upset with me and held my hair back. Marah made sure I got home safe in the passenger seat. I reciprocated by not vomiting in her car. Instead, I let go the second we pulled into the driveway.

Normally, I'd be embarrassed by this type of behavior, but I've only ever been that pukey on a handful of occasions throughout my short lifetime. That's not so bad. Especially considering how *old* I am.

-Amy Adoyzie  
[amyadoyzie.com](http://amyadoyzie.com)

\* \* \* \* \*

Do not adjust your Razorcake Fanzine columns.

Yes, your favorite pøwer pøp pøliceman, Rev. Nørb, had recently broached the topic of being an old dude in issue #40 (coincidentally, not just the issue number, but also the number of years in which the Reverend has been on this earth with us). So's my present column reads like I'm beating a dead birthday horse made of tiny cubes of cheese. In my defense, I decided on writing about being a sexy gramma weeks before I received the last issue and I'm too stubborn (i.e., lazy) to change my mind.

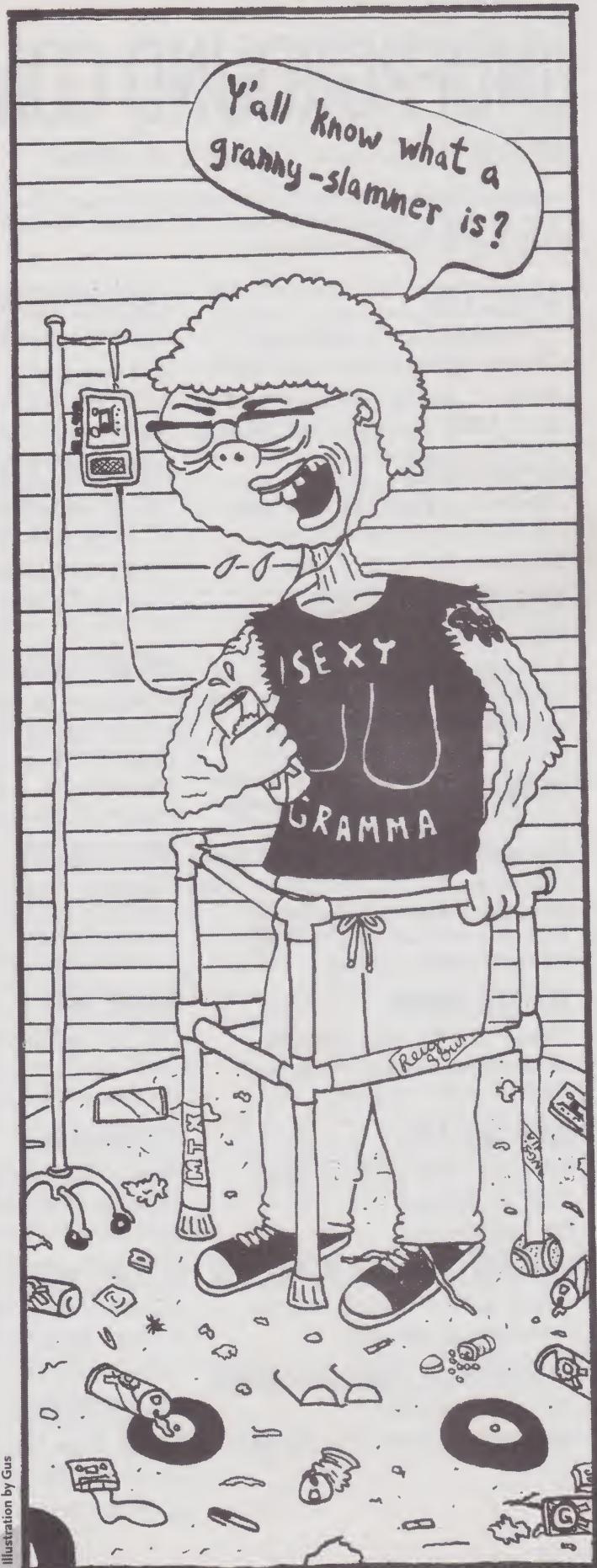
As an apology for unknowingly aping his latest subject matter, I offer an open letter.

Dear Mr. Reverend Nørb,

First and foremost, I must admit that I do not own any Boris the Sprinkler records nor have I ever seen your band perform. During the Boris heyday in the mid 1990s, I was singularly consumed with The Mr. T Experience and had no place in my consciousness for anything that wasn't associated with Dr. Frank. However, I did see you in live action when I was stuck in my parents' house watching daytime television over summer vacation. Jenny Jones was hosting another episode of her riveting talk show about bizarre crushes and there was a young woman in a short black skirt and Chuck Taylors gushing about you beneath bright studio lights. I can recall, as vividly as one can remember a scene they saw on a television set more than ten years ago, you stumbling onstage with your antler helmet and zebra print shorts spazzing out. I remember thinking two things: 1) Are pop-punkers allowed to wear shorts *that* tight? 2) How do I get on that show to talk about my adoration for Dr. Frank? (Those questions are now moot because I'm all about the freedom of tightness and I've already professed my undying devotion to MTX at shows somewhere in between *Love Is Dead* and *Revenge Is Sweet, and So Are You*.)

Aside from sharing that golden televised moment, I wanted to thank you as well. Thanks for your manic columns, disregard for paragraph breaks and periodically using the lower case "i" while referring to yourself. You've made an honest craft of being a fanzine columnist for jerks like me to write about nonsense.

Fondly,  
Amy



# UNDERGROUND COMMUNIQUÉ RECORDS

1220 W. Hood Ave. Chicago, IL 60660

[www.Undercomm.org](http://www.Undercomm.org)

Our Releases are available from **No Idea Records**, **LittleType.com**, **Interpunk.com** and **ALL vinyl releases at VinylCollective.com** or direct through us. Make checks or money orders payable to **Justin Schwier**, not UCR, thanks.

"Our bands are not going to take over the world, we just like what they do, we hope you do too."

## ANGEL EYES

"Something to do with death."  
CD 4 songs/49 minutes. (\$10 ppd)  
NEW! "...and for a roof, a sky full of stars" CDEP 2 songs/27 min. (\$6 ppd)

## BLACK CROSS

"Severance Pays" LP (\$10 ppd)  
(co-released with Tuned To You  
Records) green or pink vinyl

## FEW AND THE PROUD

"Stampede" LP(\$10 ppd)  
11 songs, blue marble vinyl.  
(exPlan of Attack, Double Crossed &  
Hostage Situation. Members of  
Harm's Way, Weekend Nachos)

## FOUR STAR ALARM

NEW! "Tilted/Cities in Dust" 7"  
2 songs(black or blue vinyl)(\$5 ppd)  
(Etched drawing on the B Side of the  
record!) (members of the Bomb /  
Explode and Make Up / Horace  
Pinker & the Reputation)

## FOURTH ROTOR

"Plain" CD 9 songs. (\$6 ppd)  
(ex Ambition Mission, V.Reverse, pre  
Canadian Rifle, Days Off)

## HAUNTED LIFE

"the Dust Has Settled" CDEP  
7 songs (\$6 ppd)  
(ex Expired Youth)

## J CHURCH / MINORITY BLUES BAND

4 song split 7" orange marble  
colored vinyl (\$5 ppd)

## J CHURCH / SOUND ON SOUND

NEW! 4 song split 7"  
neon pink colored vinyl (\$5 ppd)

## THE METHADONES

NEW! "Career Objective" LP  
(\$10 ppd) (mbrs of the Bomb,  
ex Screeching Weasel,  
Sludgeworth, Riverdales)

## MEXICAN CHEERLEADER

"Kings and Kings' Hoots" CD  
12 songs (\$10 ppd)  
"Mexican Mystery Tour" CDEP  
8 songs (\$6 ppd)  
(ex Oblivion / Apocalypse Hoboken)

## MY BIG BEAUTIFUL

NEWER! "The Way Things Are: the  
Soundtrack to My Life, Volume  
One" CD 12 songs (\$10 ppd)  
(ex the Bomb, co-released with  
Fudgesickill Records)

## NEW BRUISES

"Goodbye Middle Class" 7" 4 songs  
(white or yellow vinyl) (\$5 ppd)  
(co release with Team Science  
Records) (ex Mid Carson July)

## X ONE WAY X

"s/t" LP w/CDr 40 songs (\$10 ppd)  
(ex Thursday, members of the  
Procedure / Between the Wars)

## O PIONEERS!!!

"Black Mambas" CD & LP  
10 songs (\$10 ppd)(co release with  
Team Science Records)

## REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

NEWER! "Dreamland" CDEP  
4 songs (\$6 ppd) (ex Articles of  
Faith, Jawbox, Kerosene 454)

## ROLLO TOMASI

"Work Slow Crush Foes" CD  
11 songs (\$10 ppd)  
(ex Gauge & Hanalei)

## SHOT BAKER

NEWER! "Awake" CD & LP  
(yellow/black vinyl) 10 songs  
(\$10 ppd)

"Time to Panic" (first demo re-  
issue) CDEP 5 songs (\$6 ppd)

## SHOT BAKER / VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

"Vindictives Tribute" split 7"  
4 songs (marble green vinyl)  
(\$5 ppd)

## V/A - THE WORLD I KNOW:

A Tribute to Pegboy  
CD 24 songs (\$6 ppd)  
All bands covering their favorite  
Pegboy songs! Featuring: Matt  
Skiba(Alkaline Trio), Shot Baker, Vic  
Bondi(Articles of Faith/Report  
Suspicious Activity), Haymarket Riot,  
Rollo Tomasi and 19 more.

## COMING SOON:

- Ambition Mission  
"Discography" CD  
35 songs. (\$10 ppd)  
(Pre This is My Fist, Canadian Rifle,  
Chronic Seizure & Fourth Rotor.)  
(Re-issue with same songs as the  
Government Music version, but with  
new/updated artwork and lyrics.)

- The Methadones  
"Not Economically Viable" LP
- Bhopal Stiffs "1985-1989"  
Discography LP w/CD  
(vinyl will be co-released with  
Lengua Armada!)
- Shot Baker "TBA" LP  
(CD version on Riot Fest Records)

MY TWENTY-FIFTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT



BEN SNAKEPIT PO BOX 49447 ATX 78765 BENSNAKEPIT@GMAIL.COM



**"It's a short story about conjoined twins who hate each other—and are about to duel to the death."**

## SQUEEZE MY HORN GARY HORNBERGER

# Pieces of Light Bulb Stuck in His Head

For me, the magic of punk music started some twenty-odd years ago when some friends and I bought The Vandals on tape and we marveled in the new freedoms we found there. Not being a musician myself, I latched onto the coattails of a friend's band and all the other bands that shot off of that. When I received a call this summer from Tim at the head desk of what was once Visual Discrimination, I called back without haste. I was invited to what was dubbed as a "Visual Discrimination Punk Reunion."

As with any reunion, I found it bittersweet: the fact that we all had survived was sweet; on the downside, we were just getting old. The original guys were all there, except Jeff Banks—who we feel really could care less about us Californians—and Junior. Tim, who set the thing up, Steve, whom I admire for putting up with us and is always there, Jeff Z., who I was with the night he got the boot, were all in attendance. R. D., the replacement drummer showed late, and then there were the rest of us who latched on to this band for our fifteen minutes of sub-par fame, and all the wives and kids. I must say that it's always fun to see and chat it up with these guys. It is truly amazing that we all made it, considering some of the destructive habits some of us had. It may be the first time I have left Tim's without some memento of V.D., but I think I have everything that Tim could give me, except the negatives of the pictures the night he jumped up while singing and came down with pieces of a light bulb stuck in his head, blood running down his face. Probably some of the best and most punk rock photos I had ever taken. Thanks, Tim. So, yeah, I had a good time. It's no fun getting older but it is fun looking back and sharing with others. See, we punks aren't all that bad.

I was told that there would be one of these every year. If that happens, great. I hope we can get Big Frank and Banks to show, and if it doesn't happen and we all pop up to do something every few years, that'd be okay, too. So, in ending, I just want to tell all of those guys thanks for the friendships, the shows, the drinking, and the best twenty-some-odd years of a guy's life. THANKS!

### BIG FUCKING DEAL #1

By Marc Parker, 3\$ U.S.

Big fucking deal is right! I just don't get

the point in writing a month-long diary and then putting it into a comic/zine. If there were comical events that happen each day, I could see that, but I rode to work on my bike, smoked pot, and drank beer gives me nothing. Now if you rode the bike into a bus and there was a fiery crash that ignited the pot and it was put out with beer, you have something. I will give points for drinking Pabst Blue Ribbon, but I have to also take them back for shopping at Albertson's. I must say, in closing, this is personal stuff that won't make it to *Entertainment Tonight*. (Marc Parker, 2000 NE 42 Ave. #221, Portland, OR 97213)

### I REALLY STEPPED IN IT THIS TIME #6

By Brian Dubin, \$?

Now here is a comic/zine that is written like a diary, but is funny and the crap this guy does is exciting. I mean, come on, who doesn't feel a connection when he gives the finger to his old crappy job? I felt so at one with the writer at that moment; I totally congratulate him. The rumor about his sexcapades is a riot. It feels like a commercial. The cover collage is pretty funny, too. Tell me there is nothing funny about a dog in red shirt and black blazer trying to pick up a hottie while leaning on a pinball table. Ah, the rotten smell of the seventies! So get out there and really step in it. (Brian Dubin, 3019 St. Paul St., Apt 2f, Baltimore, MD 21218, abracadaverr@gmail.com)

### CRAMHOLE #1

By Billups Allen, \$?

There is a punk rock heaven and I have found it in the pages of *Cramhole*. I don't know how this guy found the parallel to some of my own experiences, but he has, and I'm laughing at myself. The odd feeling of being a chastised old punker is summed up perfectly, along with the feelings toward the new youth musical beliefs. The main story made me laugh out loud to a point where my dogs came running in to see what was going on. I can't even describe the story without being pro-biased. Let's just say the guest is perfectly annoying, and to some degree, fully realistic. I just can't believe the main characters allowed her so much slack, but I think that's what makes it so funny. *Cramhole* is truly my rough diamond. You

have to get your hands on it. (Billups Allen, 232 E. University Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85705, cramholethecomic@hotmail.com)

### FUN TIME COMIX #7

By multiple artists, \$2.00 U.S.

*Fun Time Comix* is just a little to jived for me. The art is too surreal and the writing is to art-fag. The comic is well put together, but that's about it. This one is done in a medium beyond my ability to describe, so I won't. (Madison Underground Press and Records, madisonundergroundpress@hotmail.com, www.buddhafart.com)

### THE HIC-UP #1

By multiple artists, free

Punk rock in a free comic, how great is that? This little dude has several good little stories, including my favorite: bowling ball head and his first punk show. I also like the Christmas wish list, because everyone likes Mountain Dew. If this little dude stays the course, they're going to have to up the printing quantities. I must say this is better than *Fun Time Comix*. (madisonundergroundpress@hotmail.com)

### MAYFLIES & SLIDE GUITARS

By Ed Moorman, \$5.00 U.S.

This one is a collection of comics and poetry. At first, I thought it was going to be nonsense, but as the room darkened, the poems became more heartfelt. The ability to deal with hardships in life is hard to conquer, yet they are eased into submission with the words and visuals of this book. The only troubling part is that, so far, every book including this one has had some figure in it smoking pot. Is pot really the drug that makes writers lucid? Anyway, this book starts with some strange discussion over eggs and toast—and maybe I was mentally blocking—but it really made no sense. The rest of the book, however, has some really feel good passages. This one needs to be read, perhaps, in a drunken or high state of being to get the full effect, but it still hits mental fortitude if you're coherent. (Ed Moorman, 101 E. 25<sup>th</sup> St., Apt #1, Mpls., MN 55404, ed.is.so.dead@gmail.com, www.edsdeadbody.com)

As with any  
reunion,  
I found it,  
bittersweet:

the  
fact  
that we  
all  
had  
survived  
was  
sweet;

on the downside,  
we were just  
getting old.

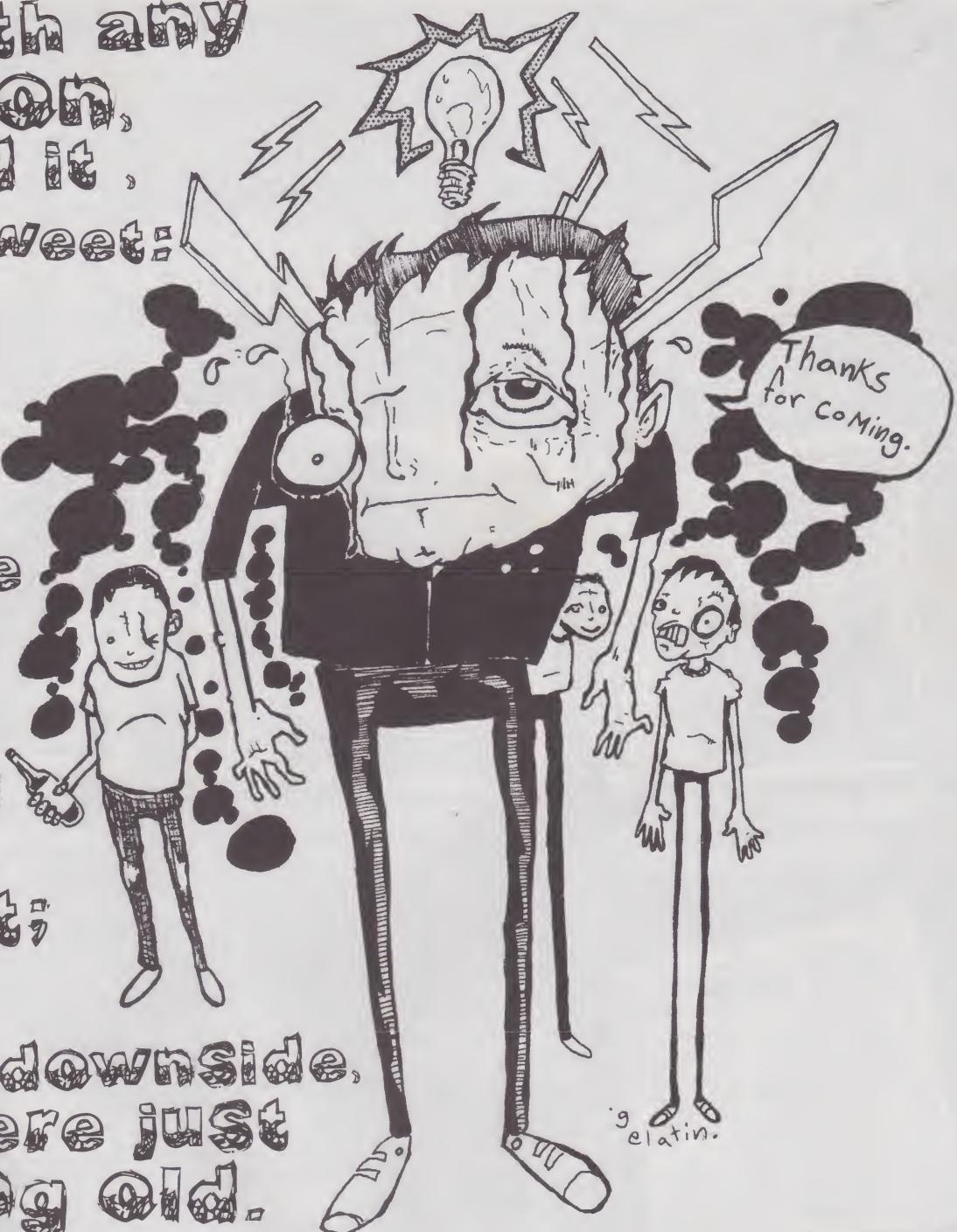


Illustration By Ryan Gelatin

#### OUT OF ORDER COMIX

\$3.00 U.S.

I'm sorry, but it's another diary! I really ZZZZ don't know what ZZZZ to say SNORE! It looks like ZZZ it was drawn by ZZZZ a seven year old. Once again, I hate to be harsh, but it's just a day in the life of the mundane. Sorry. (Out Of Order, PO Box 72775, Davis, CA 95617, [www.outoforderrecords.com](http://www.outoforderrecords.com))

#### THE EYE HAND OF THE CAROLINAS

By A. Goldfarb, 50 cents U.S.

It's a short story about conjoined twins who

hate each other—and are about to duel to the death—when a sharply dressed eye hand ascends from the depths of the bog and stares the brothers into submission. I know it seems wacky, but it is actually pretty fricken cool. Maybe it's the story or maybe it's the art, but it is a stand out for fifty cents.  
([www.ognersstump.com](http://www.ognersstump.com))

#### XXX SCUMBAG PARTY

Volume 2 of the  
Collected Angry Youth Comix  
By Johnny Ryan, \$18.95 U.S.

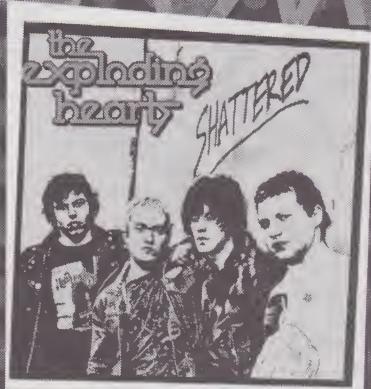
I have so many of the *Angry Youth Comix* that I really don't know what to say. If, as a

reader, you enjoy shit, fuck, and dick humor, then this is the comic for you. Every panel excels in the depth of gross. The characters are usually pimple-faced, diseased-riden, shit-flinging degenerates who drink or fuck into excess. It's not my PowerAde, but if you find that funny, here's page after page of it. Good reading to you! (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, [www.fantagraphics.com](http://www.fantagraphics.com))

—Gary Hornberger



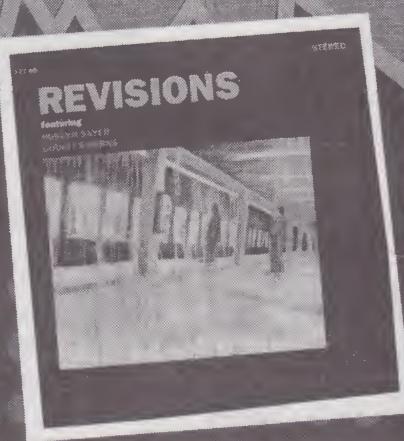
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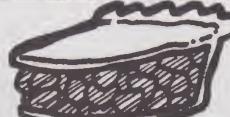


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# THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

RHYTHM CHICKEN

"As we stepped onto Michigan soil, I mentioned to my fellow traveler, "I heard this state likes to fuck!"

# Interstate

## Men of Leisure

The Dinghole Reports  
By The Rhythm Chicken  
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)  
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

Balls or ass? BALLS OR ASS? This is today's big question. Does XM Radio suck BALLS... or does XM Radio suck ASS? I know. I know. You're all thinking to yourselves right now, "Who cares?" XM pretty much exists outside of most punk rockers' daily lives, right? It's like asking which N'Sync song has the most teenage crush references, or what Harry Potter book sold the most on its release date. WHO THE FLOCK CARES?! One should probably leave the reporting on XM Radio to magazines like *Spin* or *Maxim*, right? Well, I've found myself in a lab rat situation where I feel I must comment on XM's sucking preference, be it balls or ass.

So, a few years back I started cooking at the Shoreline Restaurant in Gills Rock, WI, the northernmost inkling of civilization on this erect wang of a peninsula called Door County. Every now and then I'll glance out the back window at the phone booth which hosted the first ever Rhythm Chicken telephone tour (also seen on the back of a Crucifucks album! This booth's got rock cred, let me tell ya!). Mike, the owner, had XM Radio put into the kitchen to keep us slop slingers happy. The other kitchen workers are generally overjoyed at such technological hijinx. I, however, remain steadfastly skeptical. Were it not for this job, I would have no exposure to such luxury.

My first impression was of mild amusement. I flipped through the channels and found it kinda neat. There's an old school R&B channel called *Soul Street*, which I still find to be most enjoyable. There are channels for '80s metal, hardcore, teeny-bopper punk, old-school punk, folk-americana, all kinds of hip hop, or whatever else you might want. Then my amusement began to quickly turn to agitation. The only channel I could really stomach was one called *Fred*, which is labeled as "classic alternative," a phrase which makes me want to shit on the face of whoever would say such a thing seriously. I found it a pleasant shock to hear the Descendents, The Damned, or The Dickies on the "radio" while flipping burgers (keep

in mind that Gills Rock is hundreds of miles away from anything resembling KROQ). Unfortunately, there's also Depeche Mode, Gene Loves Jezebel, and Janes Addiction thrown into the mix, not to mention a DJ who thinks he's hot scheiss.

Well, I gave up trying to make my coworkers listen to the *old guy* channel. More often than not, the default channel is the modern alternative poop chute called *Ethel*. Even on this channel I find a few things I can stomach: the occasional Fugazi track, a Ramones song here and there, and now a splattering of Against Me! songs. Once again, they are a few rainbow trout in a stream overflowing with bullheads and carp. Now I am painfully exposed to such artists as Sublime, 311, Incubus, Korn, and System Of A Down. At the very least, it makes me feel like demanding a raise for having such audio feces spackled into my ears. Balls or ass?

My protests are usually vastly outnumbered. The only time the XM system is turned off is during the holiest time of every week during Packer season. As far as I'm concerned, XM Radio should be on its knees giving extended toothless blowjobs to the Green Bay Packer Radio Network into eternity. Then, whenever the GBPRN grows tired of such follies, Bob Uecker gets sloppy seconds. Just yesterday I was preparing the night's supply of coconut shrimp tempura while listening to the Pack's triumphant fourth quarter comeback, squarshing the San Diego Chargers thirty-one to twenty-four! Such victorious kitchen solidarity cheers were soon followed by some "song" by a group called the Gorillas, or the Nationals, or someone's Chemical Romance or some other such drivel. That's like feasting on the finest rare beef tenderloin only to have it yanked away and replaced by a graying, half-eaten Big Mac with tire tracks on it. Balls or ass?

One of my coworkers commented on how cool it is that people all over the country can now listen to the exact same channel of whichever type of music. I call that nationwide homogenization. I much prefer something called regional variance. What's big on the west coast might not even appear on the Midwest's radar. What's huge in the Midwest be scoffed at on the east coast. What's the hottest shit in the Dakotas might be the coldest phlegm in Texas. I think XM

Radio is poised to turn this country into one big generic CD purchasing market, and that's gAY with a capital AY, if'n you ask me.

(Okay, Rhythm Chicken. Now that you got your XM bashing out of the way, let's get to some new ruckus! – F.F.)

[I guess I should sell my stock in XM before I start badmouthing it, eh? – Dr.S]

Sooooooooo, one of my best friends was getting married. I've known Dr. Lord Kveldulfr, Ph.D. since the third or fourth grade. Ruckus O'Reily and I were asked to be part of his wedding to take place in Kalamazoo, MI, across Lake Michigan. Ruckus and I jumped at the chance to finally ride the SS Badger. This ferry connects U.S. Hwy 10 from Manitowoc, WI to Ludington, MI. We'd always been mystified by the Happy Schnapps Combo's tribute to this fine vessel, and now we'd scheduled our fateful cruise!

*Food and cocktails are real cheap  
And da' water ain't dat deep  
Trow your troubles on a heap  
Day just don't matter  
You'll be sorry when it's done  
Cuz you're havin' so much fun  
When you go across the lake  
ON DA' BADGER!*

We couldn't stop singing this hit song (along with "Dutch Pile") for the entire four-hour voyage, accompanied with healthy portions of beer from the portside lounge! In the immortal words of Ruckus O'Reily we were "interstate men of leisure!"

As we stepped onto Michigan soil, I mentioned to my fellow traveler, "I heard this state likes to fuck!" We drove the three hours to Kalamazoo and found the rest of the wedding party properly sauced at a local tavern and joined in. There was an afterbar party in the parking lot with pilfered pitchers of local brew, soon followed by front yard cheerios (whippin' shitties!) in some rented SUV (God Bless America, fuckers!). It didn't take me long to realize how Lower Michigan makes me drunk.

Saturday morning, Ruckus and I were shaken awake early and touted to the



## **It wasn't long before I took off all my clothes and walked around naked before jumping into Indian Lake. This is what they told me, anyway.**

Long Lake Tavern for Bloody Marys and Old Styles. We had to get a good schnook on before the strip clubs opened at noon! After a visit at the HobNob and the Portage skatepark, we made our way to the wedding rehearsal and dinner, soon followed by a full night of imbibement at the Kraftbrau and Bells Brewery Tasting Room. The night ended at an after-hours strip club where Kveldulfr was pulled on stage for bachelor lapdance orgy action. He instantly pulled off his shirt and whipped both hands into the air "touchdown style." No stripper would go near him till he put his shirt back on! I love it when Michigan can't handle Wisconsin!

Sunday was wedding day. The ceremony was on the shore of Indian Lake, soon followed by a party-barge pontoon boat ride full of champagne and cheap beer! The reception was underway, as was the extensive consumption of fermentables. Kveldulfr insisted that all the men partake in a shot of gin (tavern squad tradition!). The DJ was playing various wedding dance favorites while the groom and I pogooded about in merriment. I ended my best man toast by saying, "So let me be the first to offer you two your first beef jerky as a married couple!" as I handed them jerky from Easy Street Meats, Dykesville's finest! The night was building up to something quite chaotic!

(Is this a wedding album or a ruckus report? - F.F.)

[We're running out of space here, Chicken. I would advise getting to the ruckus. - Dr.S.]

The crowd was starting to think the celebration was drawing to a close when Michigan Matt and I snuck out to the car to get the Chickenkit. We set it up on the corner of the dancefloor as the family and friends observed, somewhat confused. I mounted the age-old trap and pulled on the stinky Chickenhead. The cheers started as I began pounding out yet another dose of wedding ruckus rock! This was one of those special performances where you could actually tell how much alcohol the Chicken had consumed judging by his "performance." This gig only lasted for one "song," furious and stunning as it was, with sticks and ears flying about in frantic mania. Those in attendance were simply beside themselves in disbelief! I love it when Michigan can't handle Wisconsin!

After that initial and only blast of crazed chicken rock, I lifted both wings skyward to accept all Michigan's praise (signature move!). The crowd simply went ape! Then Kveldulfr claims that I sort of "melted" and slithered out of my throne while kicking the drums around. Michigan Matt carried my limp carcass around for a stint. The bride and groom posed for

photos with the fallen hero. It wasn't long before I took off all my clothes and walked around naked before jumping into Indian Lake. This is what they told me, anyway.

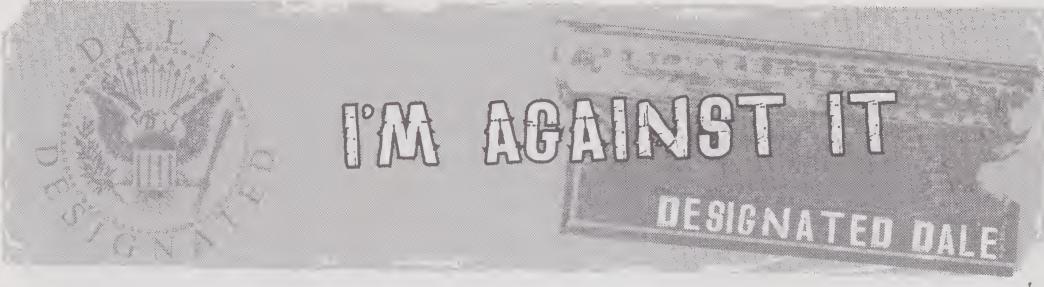
(It looks like in your case Wisconsin couldn't handle Michigan! - F.F.)

[Well, Mr. Chicken, you certainly know how to make a fool of yourself. - Dr.S.]

So, to get back to the question of the day, does XM Radio suck balls or ass? After two painful tourist seasons of exposure to this new network, I can say with utmost certainty that XM Radio sucks BOTH BALLS AND ASS... and even likes rubbing its nose on the taint. Mark my words, some day RC Radio will be heard in every kitchen!

Maximum congratulations go out to two lucky couples this issue: Kveldulfr and Allison, and Ruckus Thomas and Kristen! Three congratulatory clucks go out to the newlyweds! CLUCK! CLUCK! CLUCK!

**-Rhythm Chicken**  
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com



"Let's see, carrying  
golf clubs, or  
dodging poo from  
some shit-smeared,  
naked ape?"

# Ramones Karma

By the time you're reading this, the Richie Ramone vs. the Ramones lawsuit may have very well taken a turn for the worse as the sticky court litigation goes on. Or it all may very well have been finished and settled out of court. If you haven't the slightest idea of who or what I'm talking about, I'm speaking of Richard Reinhardt, the third Ramones drummer from 1983-87 who beat the skins on three of their studio records. Richie's a Jersey native and had played with NYC-area bands The Shirts and Velveteen before taking over Marky's hiatus from the drum stool (but that's a whole other column on getting into Marky's past band history as well as with the Ramones).

Richie did a bang-up job during his stretch with the brothers Ramone, but I gotta admit that even though he wasn't my personal favorite drummer of all the Ramones' years, I always had nothing but respect for his chops in the studio and live. He was by far the Ramones' most technically trained/jazz-inspired guy they had behind the kit. Because of this—it was kinda funny—soon after Richie left the band, there were rumors floating around that he was a golf caddie somewhere down in Florida. I'd always thought he was gonna pop up somewhere else, drumming for some other established band down the line. Hey, go ahead and laugh if it was true about him becoming a golf caddie, butthole, but weirder things have happened to people in rock'n'roll during their steps down. Lest we forget the time that Dee Dee Ramone was actually trying to get an active gig as a guitarist in GG Allin's band, The Murder Junkies, back in 1991. (That didn't work out, thank the good lord above.) Let's see, carrying golf clubs, or dodging poo from some shit-smeared, naked ape? Fore! Anyway, something else has recently surfaced concerning our past Ramone named Richie.

Reinhardt filed a federal lawsuit this past September, claiming he's owed a shit-ton in royalties for his songs sold over the Internet. His songs, you ask? Yep, Richie actually wrote half a dozen recorded tunes during his tenure as a Ramone: "Humankind" from the 1984 *Too Tough to Die* LP, "Somebody Put Something in My Drink" from the 1986 *Animal Boy* LP, and "I Know Better Now" and "I'm Not Jesus" from the 1987 *Halfway to Sanity* LP. Richie also penned a couple of songs that ended up as b-sides on a pair of U.K. singles from two

of the above-mentioned LP sessions: "Smash You" and "(You) Can't Say Anything Nice."

In the crosshairs of Richie's lawsuit are a bunch of online music stores, including Wal-Mart, Apple Inc., and RealNetworks. Besides going after the 'net-related chains, Reinhardt is also suing the Ramones' prior management and a pair of production companies who were/are associated with the Ramones. Going even further (and this one made me really scratch my head), Richie's got the estate of Johnny Ramone on his sue list, as Johnny was always known as the iron fist behind the band's business situations. I'd give anything to see John alive and kicking today, just to see the stone-cold, evil look on his face of having to deal with this court battle. And anyone who knew Johnny knows he had a certain menacing look that could kill you twice before your body slumped lifeless to the floor. It kind of makes you wonder if Richie's going after the estate of Joey or Dee Dee (if he hasn't by the time this goes to print). In this current lawsuit, Richie claimed that there was never any agreement to sell his songs digitally, and that he had not fully signed over the rights to the songs he had written. He also wants an injunction to prevent the future digital distribution of his work without his personal consent.

This isn't the first time that Richie has gone after his former band for claiming what he says is rightfully his. He'd previously filed a lawsuit in the New York State court, accusing the Ramones of shortchanging him on performance royalties. That first case had been put on hold while the two sides tried to work out a settlement, but the discussions at the table weren't jiving and now the gloves have been thrown down on the ice, so to speak, with this current federal case being filed (insert "Uh-oh!" canned studio track here).

Jeff Sanders, Reinhardt's lawyer, was quoted in the most recent news on the matter: "Richie has never gotten the recognition creatively, and certainly economically, for being a mainstay for the Ramones during what was probably not their most visible period. My plaintiff has never authorized the duplication, distribution, performance, or other exploitation of the compositions in any non-physical digital format. He's basically been paid a fraction of what he's due." This isn't anything new. During the time when Richie was a Ramone, the fact was that he

never made nearly as much as the other band members on tours or even got a decent cut of the merch sales. This weighed him down more and more as the time went on. It came to a head one night immediately after a show, when he got offstage, walked straight outside to where a limo was waiting, and drove off to never be seen again for many years. Soon after, no one even knew where he moved to or where to contact him. His accruing pile of royalty checks literally sat for over a decade, according to Monte Melnick, the Ramones' steadfast road manager (also known as the fifth Ramone, and quite rightfully so. Greetings, Monte).

Sanders went on to explain that even though Reinhardt only wrote six songs when he was with the band, he also performed on more than thirty Ramones tracks and that Richie had recently composed a "drum-prominent arrangement of a *West Side Story* medley" that was performed by the Pasadena Pops here in L.A., with formal approval of the estate of Leonard Bernstein. "He's a serious musician," says Sanders, adding that Richie has settled out in Scottsdale, AZ, where he makes his living as a session musician. Someone in public made the not-so-jokingly suggestion that filing a federal lawsuit was not a very punk rock way to handle the matter. Sanders replied, "It's not punk rock not to pay the people who support you, either."

Touché. It really *isn't* punk to not pay those you owe. But, come on, \$900,000? Nearly a cool *million*? And for digital sales? Think about this: Ramones records, 8-tracks, cassettes, or CDs themselves were never known for insanely flying off the shelves upon their debut in the market from 1976 through now (one of the main reasons that radio treated them like the plague, but what did/does radio really know, anyway?). As far as I know, none of their releases even went platinum (marking one million units sold). The only one (that I know of, anyway) that went gold (marking 500,000 units sold) was *Ramones Mania*, a thirty-song retrospective of the Ramones first ten studio LPs that was released in 1988. Now, you figure that online you pay anywhere from ninety-nine cents a song to roughly ten bucks for a record. Unless Richie's tune "(You) Can't Say Anything Nice" is for sale online somewhere I haven't looked, I'm counting five of his

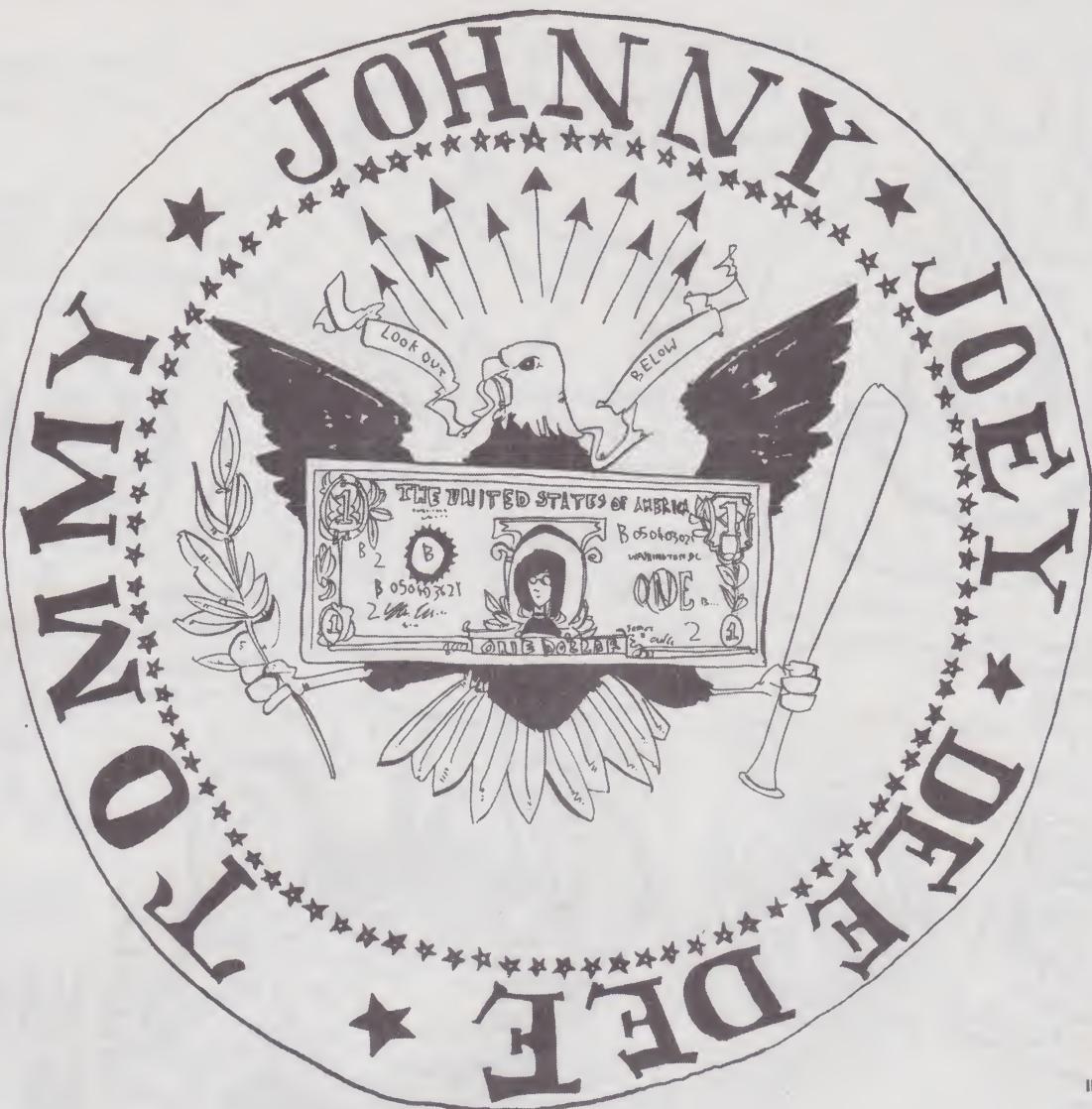


Illustration by Steve Larder  
www.stevelarder.co.uk

It came to a head  
one night immediately after a show,  
when he got offstage, walked straight  
outside to where a limo was waiting...

songs that can be purchased for download. And, remember, "Smash You" was only available on that vinyl U.K. single until it was included on the re-mastered, re-release CD of *Too Tough to Die* about five years ago. Were there that many downloads purchased of the other three LP-inclusive tunes that Richie had written, too? I can't say for sure, but based on the past record sales of those three releases, I'd be willing to bet that it isn't near the \$900,000 area he's reaching for. I mean, fuck, it's not like some Hollywood movie music scorer used the Ramones classic

"Somebody Put Something in My Drink" in the soundtrack for some inane, over-hyped, over-grossing turd of a teen summer flick, right? (God forbid). If you step back and take a honest (and I stress the word *honest*, Richie) look at the big picture, maybe he *did* have a balance of cash-ola coming to him for the 400-500 Ramones gigs he played, as well as a fair cut of the merch for his duration in the band. But, even if he does have it coming, notice I said, "did." "Did" is past tense, like "should have," as in "*Richie should have straightened all of this shit out in the*

*beginning stages after he joined the band.*" Do I feel for the guy? Absolutely, but *only* for what is truly rightfully his.

If the deaths of Joey, Dee Dee, or Johnny have taught anyone related to that band anything, I hope Richie will do the right thing and settle for what he honestly deserves.

That Ramones karma has proven to be a bitch.

I'm Against It  
—Designated Dale  
Designateddale@yahoo.com

# CHICO SIMIO

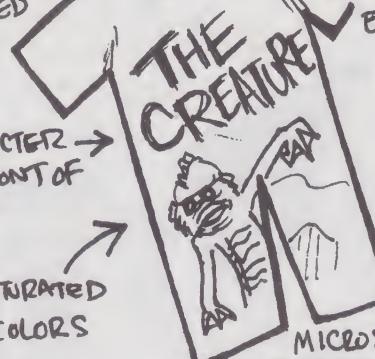


ANYONE WHO GREW UP IN THE 70'S  
PROBABLY WORE A BEN COOPER  
BRAND HALLOWEEN  
COSTUME.

TIES NEVER  
STAYED TIED

BIG CHARACTER  
AD ON FRONT OF  
COSTUME

SUPER SATURATED  
DAY-GLO COLORS

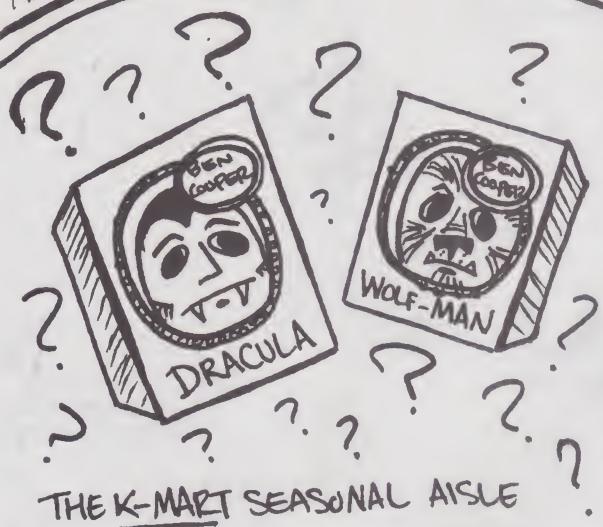


VISION IMPAIRING  
EYEHOLES

TEAR-YOUR-  
HAIR-OUT  
ELASTIC

MICROSCOPIC  
BREATHING HOLE

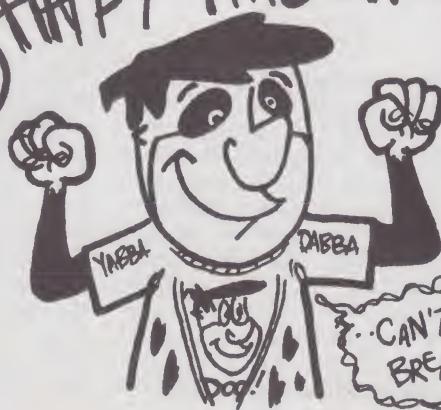
SHARP EDGES  
TO CUT FINGERS  
ON



THE K-MART SEASONAL AISLE  
HELD COUNTLESS CHOICES FOR  
TRICK-OR-TREATING SUCCESS ...  
OR FAILURE...



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!

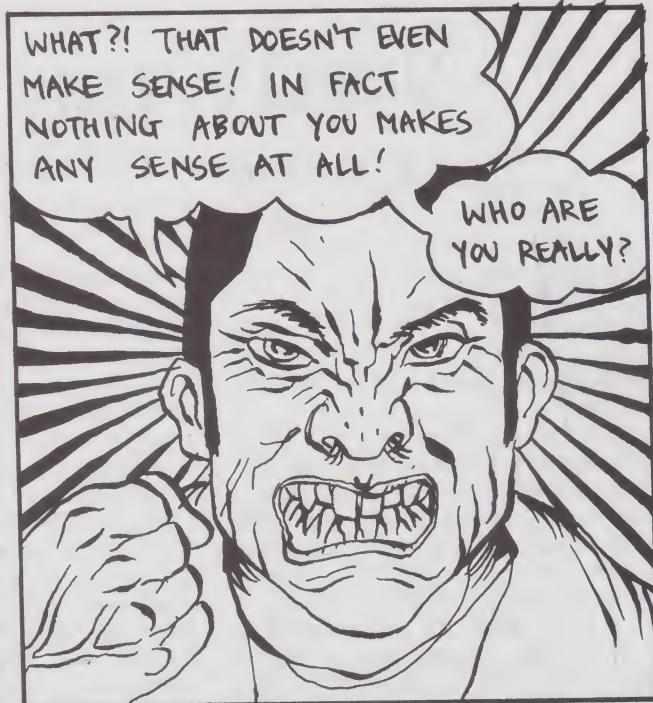


# Won Ton Not Now

By Kiyoshi

Last episode we introduced a young couple in love during a enchanted date. Everything seemed perfect when things went suddenly sour...

Part two of a love story told in four parts entitled Cobra vs. Mongoose Forever.



DOOP  
DOOLA  
DOOT  
DOO...

DOOP  
DOO?

# WHO ARE YOU?

"It was right before the banana event where Marian fornicated with a banana on stage."

## Nardwuar the Human Serviette VS. AFI

**Nardwuar:** Who are you?

**Davey:** I'm Davey Havok.

**Nardwuar:** From?

**Davey:** From AFI.

**Nardwuar:** And Davey, who do you have beside you?

**Davey:** This is Jade Puget, also from AFI.

**Nardwuar:** AFI, you're back in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. And now I finally have a chance to ask you about the importance of this place right here [Nardwuar pulls out a book], 924 Gilman. What can you tell me about 924 Gilman?

**Davey:** You know, it's interesting that you should bring that up. We were talking about it a lot on the flight over. We used to haunt Gilman Street as fans of music, and we used to play music there a lot. AFI played Gilman Street I have no idea how many times, but over the years... the first time we played Gilman Street was 1992, I think.

**Nardwuar:** Do you remember the exact date?

**Davey:** I don't remember the exact date.

**Nardwuar:** 'Cause every single gig is listed in here [Points to 924 Gilman book]

**Davey:** I'll tell you what, though. The gig that I'm talking about, we won't be listed on it, 'cause what we did, it was a show that Rancid played, very last minute, and they called us up and said that they were playing a show and just to come down and check it out. So all the band came to the show, but in between bands, we jumped up and used someone else's equipment to play three songs, which is technically the first time we performed on that stage. Later, we played our first show that we were actually on the bill—with Rancid, The Parasites, and The Hellbillys—at Gilman Street. But we've played there many times. A lot of great bands.

**Nardwuar:** Right now you're too big to play Gilman, aren't you?

**Jade:** Yeah, it wouldn't be really fun, 'cause everybody gets packed in there and everybody's crammed together. It's hot. No one can move and everybody's getting crushed.

**Nardwuar:** You guys also have the attendance

record, don't you? 'Cause I noticed, like, AFI—and Fugazi and maybe Jawbreaker—set the attendance records at Gilman.

**Davey:** And Operation Ivy. They all had it. I think the last time we played there we took the Fugazi one, which was the one after Op Ivy. But we haven't played there in years. It became, like Jade said, it became so uncomfortable for everybody involved that I think we stopped playing there in '97. But we're not allowed to play there anymore anyway because we're on a major label.

**Nardwuar:** Although I think Green Day snuck back for a gig, didn't they?

**Davey:** Yeah, they played. It was the Adeline show, right? We were talking about that the other day. Yeah, Green Day jumped up on stage during an Adeline Records party that they were having there.

**Nardwuar:** I think that's what's really important is that Gilman helped produce all these really great bands, and it doesn't always get its due, does it?

**Davey:** No, it seemed like maybe about five years ago everybody kind of knew what Gilman Street was, back when, you know: Rancid and Green Day and all that. But now you don't hear much talk about it, but it's still going strong.

**Nardwuar:** Do you have a favorite Gilman memory? Like the girl from The Insaints and the banana?

**Davey:** We were just talking about that! That's what we were talking about yesterday! Or... a few days ago, that's why I was talking about Gilman Street... I have a favorite Gilman memory about the girl from The Insaints.

**Nardwuar:** Can you explain about that, Davey Havok of AFI?

**Davey:** I was there for the banana thing, but it was right before the banana event where Marian fornicated with a banana on stage. I'd been outside, and we lived in a small town, and it was, I believe, the first time I'd gone to Gilman Street. I think it was 1991. And I was outside, and this girl with bright blue hair and matching blue-and-white striped tights—and I had a thing for blue hair—was standing on the corner. And

she walked right up to me and just started talking to me and said I was cute. I almost died. It was amazing. And then later, she had a banana inside her. And I didn't make the connection until later. But, uh, The Insaints are playing again. Actually, right before we left I saw a flyer for an Insaints show.

**Nardwuar:** I thought she died!

**Davey:** Yeah, unfortunately, she did, but I guess they're playing without her, which is very strange.

**Nardwuar:** Well, it's great to continue the tradition!

**Jade:** Yes... I remember a guy named Jeremy Spew that works security there found a dead baby in a dumpster by Gilman and brought...

**Davey:** Not a dumpster. He dug it up.

**Jade:** Oh! I heard it was in a dumpster.

**Davey:** No.

**Nardwuar:** There's a couple baby stories. Wasn't it like, Lint from Rancid, dug up a baby and then somebody brought a baby to the actual club.

**Davey:** Okay, here's the story. It wasn't Lint. It was Brett [Reed], who found it while they were practicing in there, and Jeremy—which he talks about candidly in some of his spoken-word, which is very good, Jeremy's a great guy—was with some friends a few nights prior. Um, they were not in their right frame of mind. And they dug up a very old baby out of a graveyard, freaked out that they had the baby, didn't know what to do with it, so they hid it in the then-sound booth of Gilman Street, where bands used to practice. If you worked there, you could practice on one of the weekends during the day. We used to practice at Gilman Street.

**Jade:** The baby still haunts Gilman Street.

**Davey:** And the baby still haunts Gilman Street. Brett found it in the sound booth.

**Nardwuar:** Get the story straight from AF...

**Davey:** Yeah, AF... I.

**Nardwuar:** And the 924 Gilman book! It has it all in there.

**Davey:** Yeah, there it is, it's all in there. A lot of great bands! You know, I mean we saw Samiam and Jawbreaker and Green Day and

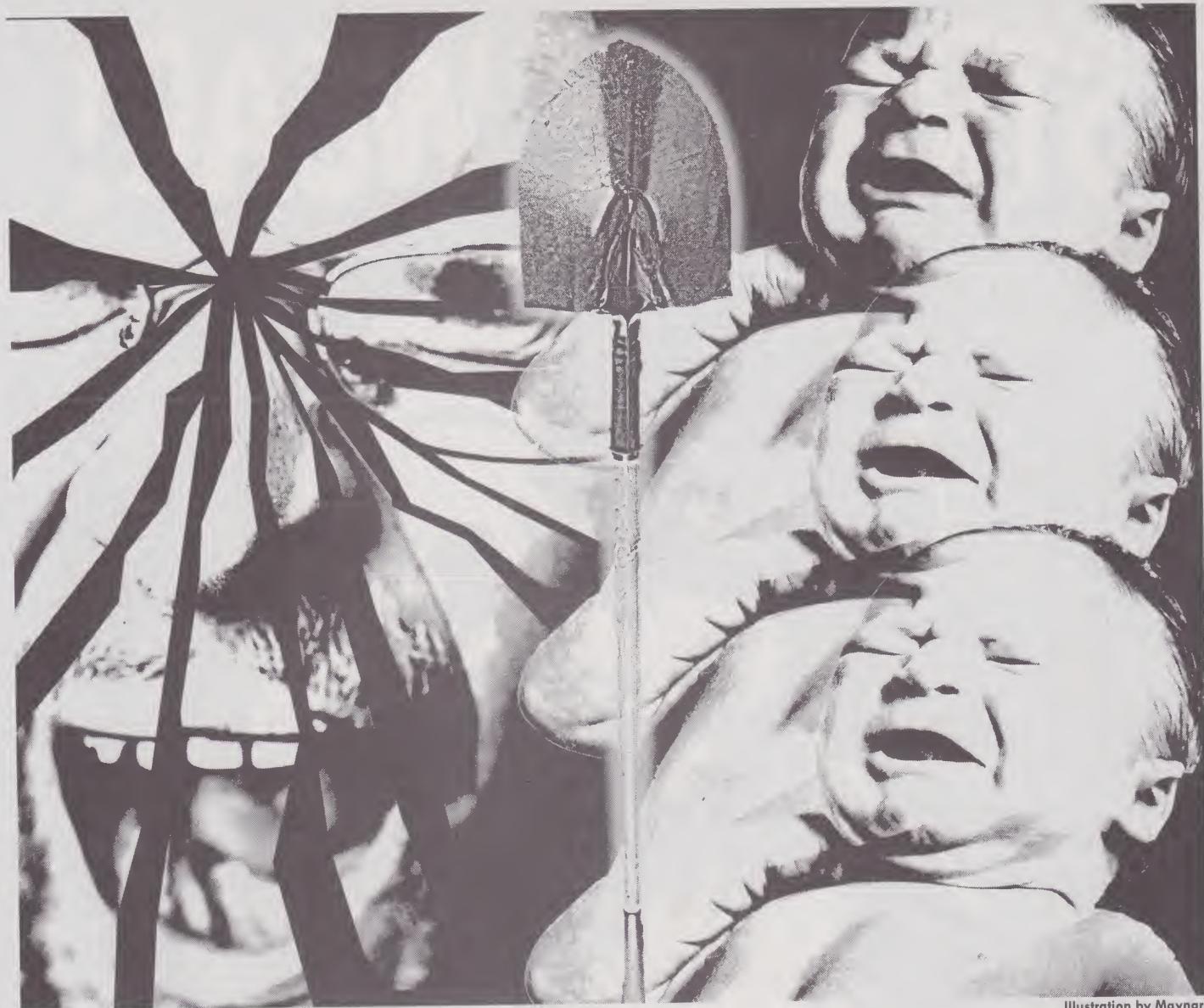


Illustration by Maynard

The Crimpshrine used to play in there and Filth. You know, all sorts of different scenes. There was a time when bands from all sorts of different genres of music would sell out Gilman Street. You could go see Bikini Kill pack it, you could go see Rocket From The Crypt pack it...

**Nardwuar:** Or The Mentors?

**Davey:** Or The Mentors. I don't know, yeah, The Mentors would pack it!

**Nardwuar:** Playing the same night as The Yeastie Girls!

**Davey:** Yes! Exactly [laughs]. Very, very well said.

**Nardwuar:** One band I really loved and didn't really get a lot of attention was The Ne'er Do Wells. [Nardwuar pulls out a Ne'er Do Wells single]

**Davey:** Ahhh, interesting. I was trying to think of this band.

**Nardwuar:** Who turned into the Hi-Fives!

**Davey:** Right! Didn't they have a connection with Brent's TV as well?

**Nardwuar:** Yes, they did, exactly! I

wondered about the connections between AFI here and The Ne'er Do Wells, because there are some.

**Jade:** There is. I was in Redemption 87 and the drummer Gary was later on in the Hi-Fives, which is an incarnation of The Ne'er Do Wells.

**Nardwuar:** And the drummer Al, of The Ne'er Do Wells?

**Davey:** Al Sobrante later was in, or earlier, was in Green Day.

**Nardwuar:** And, of course, you had some releases on...

**Davey:** Adeline Records, who is owned by our friend Billie, who is in Green Day.

**Nardwuar:** And John here [pointing to Ne'er Do Wells single], his brother was in a band Sweet Baby.

**Davey:** Sweet Baby, right, okay. So Sweet Baby then went to—is there any Green Day connection to Sweet Baby?

**Nardwuar:** I just thought they were hugely influential.

**Jade:** Sweet Children, which Green Day started out as.

**Davey:** Green Day was first called Sweet Children before they were called Green Day.

**Jade:** They found a dead baby on Gilman Street. A sweet dead baby.

**Davey:** Sweet Baby was called Sweet Baby Jesus prior to being called Sweet Baby, and they have a song called "She's from Salinas," which is near where AFI is from.

**Nardwuar:** And your drummer, Gary, from Redemption 87 was in the Hi-Fives, who were The Ne'er Do Wells. I love Gary! He's a great drummer!

**Jade:** Gary's awesome! Really nice guy, too.

**Davey:** He's actually currently working on a project with Eric Ozenne from The Nerve Agents as well, right now.

**Nardwuar:** And the guy from Inside Out too, right?

**Davey:** Is Helmet in it? I don't think Helmet's playing with them.

**Nardwuar:** What can you guys tell me about this? Can you clear this up? Rage Against The Machine, were they once a straight edge band called Inside Out?

# STRANGE WEAR!



***Beautiful Clothes For Ugly People***

8 styles of  
**Bondage**      **Bondage**      **Bondage**      and  
**Pants**            **Jackets**            **Shorts**            **More!**

## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

Ask for it by name at your local INDEPENDENT shop or buy it online at the largest site of its kind!  
Stores: we deal direct! Get in touch for Wholesale prices.

**Davey:** No. Uh, as you know, I know you know the answer to this question...

**Nardwuar:** No, I don't! No, no.

**Davey:** [laughs] Really? Do you not?

**Nardwuar:** No, please tell me. There's some connection though.

**Davey:** Well, Zack De La Rocha was a singer of a straight edge hardcore band called Inside Out, which included—what is Grandma's real name—Mark! Mark, our friend Mark, who played guitar in Inside Out and was also in Gorilla Biscuits. And he was in that band with Zack, Inside Out, who are a straight edge hardcore band on Revelation Records. And that is the connection to Rage Against The Machine. Uh, Zack is no longer straight edge.

**Nardwuar:** AFI! Jade and Davey. I'd like to ask you about Leopold's Records. What can you tell me about Leopold's Records?

**Davey:** [laughs] Well, Leopold's Records was a record store that, um, we didn't spend much time in. It's in Berkeley, it's on Durant. But Leopold's Records was more urban, if you will.

**Nardwuar:** And you hung out on the steps of Leopold's.

**Davey:** Yes! Once Leopold's Records closed, it became Tower.

**Jade:** Are you talking about the Tower steps?

**Davey:** Yes.

**Jade:** Ah, okay.

**Davey:** Yeah, that was Leopold's Records and we used to sit around on these steps, which are not the steps. If you go to Berkley and you were to talk about "the steps," they are steps prior to these which are actually on the B.C. Berkeley campus, where everybody used to hang out. But then we moved to our own steps, which were the steps in front of Leopold's Records at Durant, which became Tower, which now closed again because Tower doesn't exist.

**Jade:** That is some deep knowledge

**Davey:** Yeah, that is some deep knowledge. We used to just sit there and, uh, sit there.

**Nardwuar:** Did you guys ever live in a frat house?

**Davey:** Yes. This was probably prior to us living in that frat house. I actually lived in two frat houses.

**Nardwuar:** Were you in a frat house at that time?

**Jade:** Yes, it was no longer a frat house, it was really just a kind of squat house, but a lot of people lived there from The Distillers, and Nick from Tiger Army. And we all kind of lived in the same house.

**Nardwuar:** 'Cause I had all these visions of you guys coming back from the shows, tip-toeing back through the frat house.

**Davey:** No, both frat houses that I lived in and the frat house that we lived in together, there were no frat boys during our stay there until the very end. Our frat house, Matt Freeman used to refer to as "the squat." It wasn't technically a squat, but there were like, twenty-two, twenty-four people living in this one house and it was

communal living and it was disgusting and awful, but it's what we could afford. And right at the end of our stay there, the frat's charter got reinstated and frat boys started moving in. They couldn't kick out tenants who were there, but as soon as anybody moved out, they moved in frat boys.

**Jade:** All of a sudden, we were in an active frat, and it was a total bum-out.

**Davey:** It was awful. It was cool, though. Well, one cool thing about it was that—the what's the frat leader called? The president of the frat or whatever, was gay. And he was secretly gay and he and his boyfriend used to have sex in the showers. Like, in the communal showers, and the rest of the frat boys didn't know, which was nice.

**Nardwuar:** Winding up here, AFI. I would like to ask you about the last time we talked. I don't know if you remember, but the last time we talked in 2003.

**Jade:** Was it 2003?

**Davey:** We spoke... we spoke here?

**Nardwuar:** On tape.

**Davey:** Oh! Okay.

**Nardwuar:** The last time I talked to you, on tape, you told the people, Davey, you said, quote, "It's not cool to grab Davey's balls."

**Davey:** It's true! Under any circumstances.

**Nardwuar:** So, did people listen? Do people grab Davey's balls anymore at all, Jade?

**Jade:** I don't know. Do people grab Davey's balls?

**Davey:** Very rarely!

**Nardwuar:** 'Cause in that interview you said to the nation, you said to the world, "Don't grab my balls," in regards to an incident that happened in Edmonton, Alberta.

**Davey:** Yes. I don't know if Italy happened after that... but that was not actually my balls, it was the other matter of, uh...

**Jade:** At least, you know, get permission.

**Davey:** Yeah. Which I'm not going to give you permission.

**Nardwuar:** Did it help though? Did it help at all?

**Davey:** Yes, I guess it did.

**Nardwuar:** That public service announcement a few years ago did help.

**Davey:** It did, yes, thank you.

**Nardwuar:** Have you guys heard about a book called *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*, by Colby Buzzell?

**Davey:** Absolutely.

**Jade:** I ran into Colby Buzzell a few weeks ago.

**Nardwuar:** And he's like an ex-G.I. that used to go see AFI at Gilman and now has written an interesting book!

**Jade:** He was a hardcore kid from the Bay area and he went to Iraq and, yeah, he wrote a book about it.

**Davey:** Nick 13 and I were just talking about this the other day. We were looking for an article in *Details* that he's recently written. We were discussing how this was not his first stint at journalism. He used to do a zine called *The Insubordinator* back when we used to go to

Photo by Chris Nelson



Gilman Street and it was fantastic. He used to interview AFI and a bunch of other bands all the time, but it was a great zine because it went contrary to the outlook. It was a very, very p.c. time in Berkeley and in the scene, and very, very extreme in retaliation to the conservatism of the '80s, which it was coming out of. So, it was very, very politically correct, and this zine wasn't. It took itself far less seriously than most of the scene and it was great. We loved it for it because it was funny and people would just freak out over it. It was a good time.

**Nardwuar:** Have you been asked to play for the troops? Have you had many G.I.s coming to gigs and stuff?

**Jade:** There's been some G.I.s. We never actually played for the troops.

**Davey:** I mean, we've gotten some nice letters from G.I.s who say that our music has helped get them through that, which I'm sure is absolute hell.

**Nardwuar:** People should check out that book, though.

**Davey:** Yes, people should check out Colby's book, for sure.

**Nardwuar:** And the 924 Gilman book as well!

**Davey:** Which does have a connection, as tenuous as it may be, it does. They do have connections!

**Nardwuar:** Basically, you could say there'd be no AFI if there wasn't Gilman, maybe?

**Davey:** Well, AFI existed before, but...

**Nardwuar:** We can go that far, right Jade?

**Jade:** Yeah, I think that's totally accurate.

**Davey:** I think that's one hundred percent accurate.

**Nardwuar:** Well, thanks so much AFI. Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all?

**Davey:** Milk kills.

**Jade:** Thanks for treating us so well over the years, Canada. We'll be back!

**Nardwuar:** No more ball grabbing.

**Davey:** Oh, yes. Keep ball grabbing at a minimum, thank you very much.

**Nardwuar:** Come back in three years and see what happens. Well, thanks so much AFI. Keep on rocking in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

**Davey and Jade:** Doot doot!

To hear this interview visit  
[www.nardwuar.com](http://www.nardwuar.com)



## A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG SEAN CARSWELL

"I kept trying to figure out what DNT stood for. Descendents Nuts Transfer? Donuts Next Town?"

# HOODLEBUGGING

I rode my bike down the Hoodlebug Trail in western Pennsylvania feeling like I was stuck on both sides of a time machine. The trail itself was paved over an old commuter railroad line that started in the Pennsylvania town called Indiana and ended in Blairsville. Little reminders of the old days still ran along the buried tracks. Groundhogs stood to peer across a fallow field, chipmunks scattered away from my shadow, a buck paused on the trail before racing down to a creek to drink. The ghosts of nineteenth century industry—coal mines and iron furnaces and the young growth of a clear-cut forest—floated around me. The trail also intersected little reminders that I was very much in twenty-first-century America: the wastewater treatment plant; the baseball field with a painting of the nuclear power plant below the scoreboard; the actual nuclear power plant behind the baseball field; the freeway that ran sometimes dangerously close to the trail; the iPod I had plugged into my ears, blasting the Descendents. As I crossed over Two Lick Creek, I caught a glimpse of a

you're a geek or an English professor. Since I'm both, I loved the book. I won't bore you with all the details, but what you need to know about it is that Ong discusses the ability to write and read as a technology—which it is, though we're so accustomed to it that we don't see it that way—and it's the technology that made Western Civilization what it is. Ong says that in cultures that have never been exposed to reading or writing, thought patterns are completely different. Cultural mores, laws, traditions, etc., are all memorized in the form of an epic poem. Because there's no dictionary, people's vocabularies are only a few thousand words. People living in oral culture are no less intelligent than people living in a literate one, but they do think differently. Writing and reading changed the way people think. For one thing, when we are able to write, we can literally take thoughts out of our heads and store them somewhere else. In other words, I don't have to allocate any mental space to, say, avocados when I'm hungry for guacamole. Instead, I can just write

way that she wanted to express them with all the complexity, innuendo, and nuance she used. He can go back and read and read that notebook and what he knows will grow. More meaning will come out of those words. He'll think about it as "reading between the lines," but he's not reading between them at all. He's just gradually coming to a better understanding of what they say. And that's one of the really amazing things about reading and writing: meaning grows as you continue to reread. Even the simplest diary will become more complex, more elucidating the more you read it. Words and sentences carry a lot more information than we usually give them credit for.

In a way, that works in oral cultures, too. I'm sure when those poor Athenian bastards had to memorize *The Iliad*, the meaning grew with every recitation. In their minds, it probably started out as a war story, morphed into a gay love story, and eventually became the law of the land. It's not all that different from me listening to that Descendents album a hundred times and singing along to all the

## THE ILIAD STARTED OUT AS A WAR STORY, MORPHED INTO A GAY LOVE STORY, AND EVENTUALLY BECAME THE LAW OF THE LAND.

billboard through the trees. It showed a picture of a freeway and said, "DNT TXT N DRV."

It took me a few minutes to figure out what the hell it meant. I kept trying to figure out what DNT stood for. Descendents Nuts Transfer? Donuts Next Town?

You, on the other hand, if you have a cell phone, if you've sent a text message before, if you don't have the Descendents and donuts on the brain, probably knew right away what the sign said. You are one up on me. I was a mile down the Hoodlebug, thinking about something entirely different when suddenly *Don't Text and Drive* popped into my head. Perhaps because this revelation hit me right in the middle of the song "Hateful Notebook" in the middle of the Trail That Is Twenty-First-Century America, my brain started reeling.

Earlier this past summer, I read a book called *Orality and Literacy* by Walter Ong. It's the kind of book that you only read if

a shopping list and put avocados, jalapeno peppers, garlic salt, tomatoes, tortilla chips, and beer on it. That way, I can forget about those items until I get to the store and read my list. In the meantime, my mind will be free to wonder about things like the Descendents song "Hateful Notebook."

It's on perhaps the most underrated Descendents album, *Everything Sucks*. In short, it's a song about a girl who writes all of secrets into her notebook and the narrator of the song wants to know what's in it. More than that, though, the narrator wants to *read* what's in it. Because there's a difference between knowing what's in a notebook and reading what's in a notebook. When you know what's in a notebook, your mind assimilates the information into your thought processes, changing exactly what is written into your vague conception of what is written. When you read it, though, you know exactly what is written, exactly the thoughts that she had in the

words until the meanings grew and grew and eventually led me to thinking way too hard about it while I rode the Hoodlebug and creating a whole scenario about this sad little goth girl and her black and white composition notebook, using a nubby pencil to write all about how 45 Grave really gets her, and the too-skinny dude with his horn-rimmed glasses and DIY buzz cut, and huge internal desert of insatiable longing.

But I have time to think about these all of these ridiculous things. Why? Because I come from a literate culture that allows me to take most of my thoughts and store them on paper somewhere, or allows me to borrow or access thoughts that other people put on paper so that I could use them when I want to.

And since I had this time, I used it to wonder what the fuck DNT TXT N DRV really means. I mean beyond "don't text and drive." What does it really mean?

One of the things that Ong talks about is the turning point of literacy. Originally, people used writing just as a way of counting money or storing stuff. Want to know what's in that basket over there, look at the picture of the olive on the side of it. Want to know how much money you got for those olives, count the number of vertical lines you drew on that piece of bark. From there, the circles and lines got more advanced. They started to mean more. But what really changed everything was the vowel. Before the vowel, the circles and lines couldn't be read the same way by everyone. Where one person sees an olive, another sees an orange. Where one person sees DNT and reads it as *don't*, another person reads it as *donut*. What separates the *don'ts* from the *donuts*? The vowel. Put a vowel in a word and anyone can learn to read fairly accurately. And once anyone can read, everyone is able to take thoughts out of their heads and store those thoughts in a way that's accessible to a broader population. Laws, mores, and traditions don't have to be memorized. Just write them down and look them up if you need to. Free up your mind to invent new stuff to maybe make life easier.

When you consider this, you realize that everything we have in this culture of ours—from bicycles to baseball games to train tracks to blacktop paved over train tracks to nuclear power plants to iPods to aging punk rock bands—can be traced back to one single technology: the vowel. And now we send text messages that treat the vowel like it doesn't even matter.

But that's not my point. This isn't just a long rant to say that text messaging sucks. I have no idea whether or not it sucks. I don't have a cell phone. I've never sent a text message. Hell, it usually takes me anywhere between a week and forever just to answer an email. There's no way I'm going to walk around with some little machine that lets people send little vowelless messages about the minutia of their day. I'd rather ride my bike and listen to the Descendents.

At least that's where I am right now. I'm very happy that I don't have a cell phone, just like there was a time when I was very happy that I didn't have an email account. And it's not because I'm a Luddite. I love a lot of new technology. I was listening to an iPod while I Hoodlebugged. Sure, the music doesn't sound as good as it does when I play it on vinyl, but it's a hell of a lot more convenient than riding a bike with a record player on the handlebars. The bike I was riding was pretty state-of-the-art, too. I don't know what kind of metal it was made of, but it's a lot stronger and lighter than the steel that they used to smelt in those huge old furnaces that still dot the western Pennsylvania landscape. Even when I type this, I'm using a laptop and Microsoft Word. I may not be a fan of Microsoft and Word may have its own problems, (what with all the changes it makes to words while you're typing them; you can hardly even type "teh" anymore without the program changing it to "the.") You can hardly type Hoodlebug without a red squiggly line underneath, even though I know it's a real word, and I'm spelling it correctly). Word freaks me out sometimes, but it's still a hell of a lot better

# HER LITTLE BOOK IS HER WHOLE WORLD

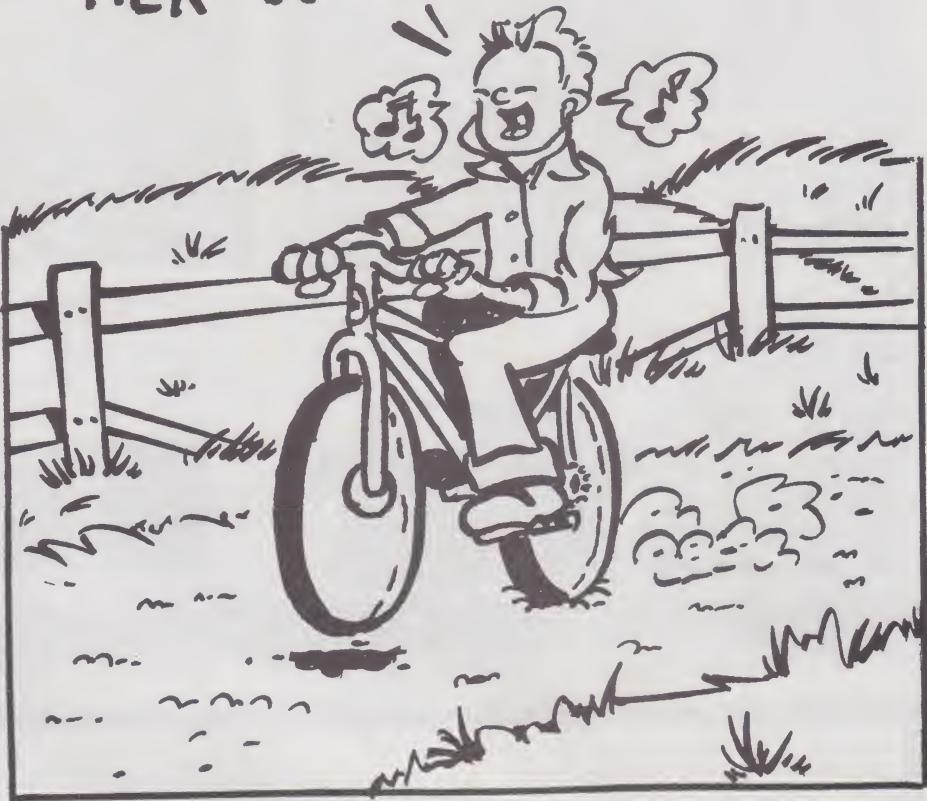


Illustration by Brad Beshaw

than the old Smith Corona word processor that I wrote my first novel on. It definitely beats the shit out of the electronic typewriter I used to write essays in high school.

But because I'm of that generation that grew up from typewriter to word processor to Word, I'm even more aware of how this technology changes our way of thinking. When I used to write on a typewriter or use a pencil (like my imaginary Hateful Notebook girl), I really thought about what I wanted to say before writing it down. I mean, I *really* thought about it. I didn't want to have to type out a whole new page just to fix a sentence. I didn't want a page full of crossed out or erased words. The word processor changed that a bit, but it wasn't until computers got cheap enough for me to be able to afford one and I started to use Word that my method of writing really changed. Now, I write as a think. I type sixty words a minute. I keep about forty of them. I use the backspace key more than I use the letter "e." And there's a fuckload of "e's" in this column.

Getting back to the Hoodlebug and the DNT TXT N DRV billboard (a phrase which, not so incidentally, does not get a squiggly line under it when you type it in Word), it was at that moment that I realized just how significant all these little insignificant things like cell phones and iPods and laptops are. When the railroad tracks are

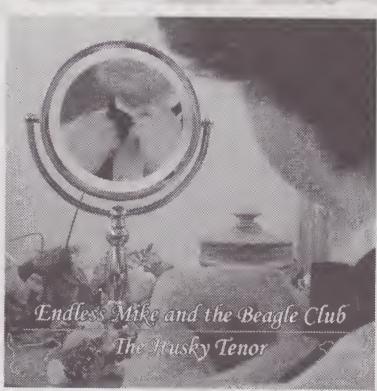
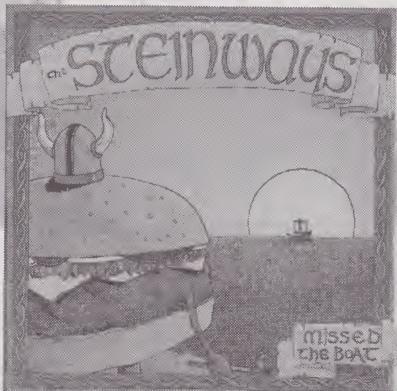
paved over to make a bike path or when the clear-cut forests grow back everywhere but where the nuclear power plant is, those are just changes to the way we get around or the way we get energy. When groundhogs gaze across fallow fields, it's just a different thing for me, a guy who lives in California, to look at. They're part of the change that is all around us and perpetual and part of the normal human experience. The actual things, like my bike and the power plant, may be unique to our time period, but they're just part of the chain of creation and destruction that have surrounded western civilization for a few thousand years. But that little computer chip that was sitting on my hip, mainlining punk rock tunes into my ears, or the computer chip that connects careless drivers passing out essentially meaningless and vowelless messages to one another, and that chip in the laptop that helps me to write this all represent something much larger than a change in our environment. They represent a change in the way our minds are working. It's a change in the way that we think, a change bigger than anything humans have undergone since they first came up with the vowel. And, goddamn, none of us knows where this is going to take us.

—Sean Carswell

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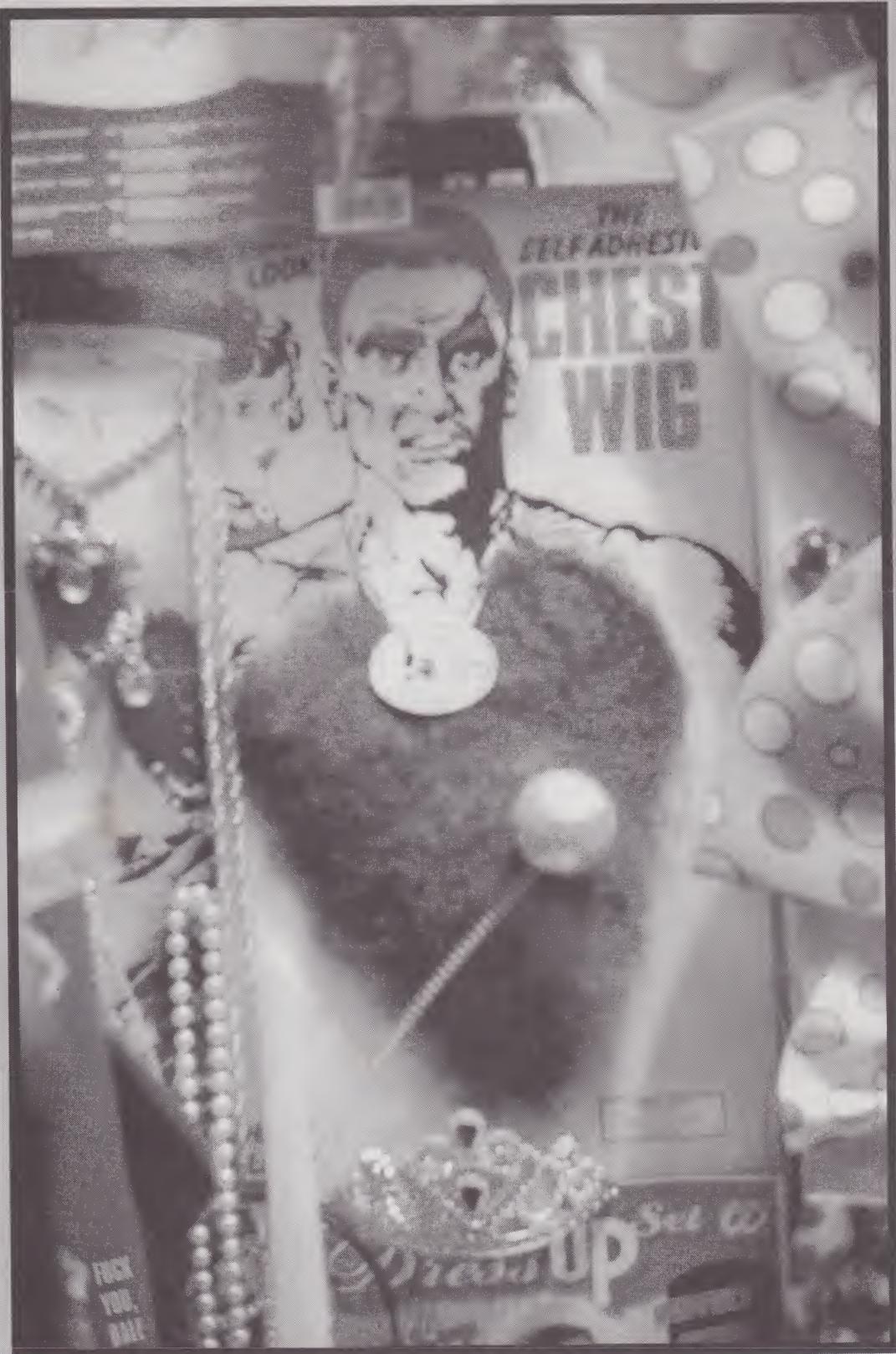
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The Unlovable are now pretty much the gold standard of pop-punk."  
- Stewart Mason, All Music Guide



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Dan Monick's  
Photo Page



I trusted Leon in a lot ways but I didn't follow his radical changes in music. I doubted what he had said about folk back in tenth grade and then, senior year, when he got into punk rock, I doubted him again. I had never heard punk, but I dismissed it anyway. I had good reason to hate punk rock. Since ditching Top 40 radio in junior high, I had listened to both kinds of good music: arena rock and progressive rock. Some people will tell you the styles are inseparable. They will cite bands like Kansas and Styx. Never trust anyone who cites Kansas or Styx as exemplars. Aside from a couple of surface

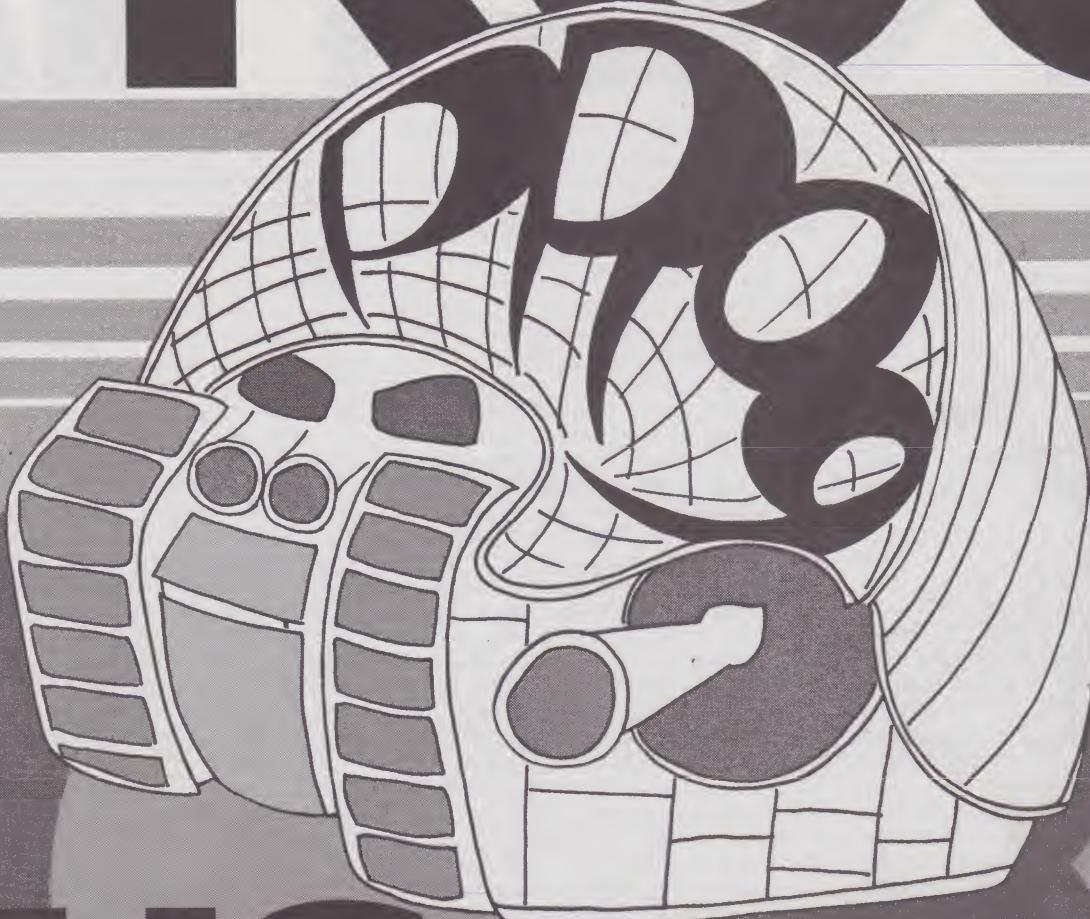
similarities—both camps believed in the intrinsic value of bass solos and gatefold double album sets—arena rock and prog rock weren't different types of music so much as competing philosophies that formed a two-party system with a shared message: rock music was a spectator sport.

Arena rock bands made it clear that I wasn't cool enough to join their ranks. They wrote mindless odes to having a good time relentlessly pandering to the lowest common denominator. Take .38 Special and their 1982 album *Special Forces*, which featured "Breakin' Loose," "Take 'Em Out," "Rough-

Housin'." Either they were trying to save on their typesetting bill or they wanted to show us that they were bad boys 'cause they used bad spellin'. I doubt, when it came to tallying merchandise sales and gate receipts, that the band's 'rhythmic skills were equally sloppy.

Droppin' all those "g's was one thing, but how best to accommodate the fan unable to read? Cowbells. Copious amounts of cowbells, clonking out the quarter notes, insuring that anyone, regardless of literacy or sobriety, could find the beat. The rock gods treated their fans like cattle, herding the masses together to boogie down. (That

# PROG



BY MIKE FALCON  
ART JUNK BY AMY ADOTYE

is before "boogie down" developed a disco connotation at which point the industry officially altered the jargon to "rockin' out.")

Arena rock bands loved flashing bravado, or at least that a strange strand of '70s style bravado—pasty, scrawny guys wearing oversized hockey jerseys or leather vests with bouquets of chest hair creeping out, slinging guitars with two, three, or six necks. They put their lifestyle on display, reminding fans that the life of an arena rocker was far removed from ours, anything but pedestrian. Like when Eric Clapton used the inner sleeve of his *Slowhand* album to parade his

collection of sports cars. Mildly decadent lyrics about getting high and getting laid were also part and parcel of the lifestyle. Not you, the listener, having sex—there was nothing participatory about the arena rock experience—but the guys in the band scoring with the ladies, typically referred to as "mama's". You were in your parents' basement, alone or with your equally hard up buddies. As a fan your job was to root for the guys in Bad Company or Foghat to get laid.

There was no harm in escapism. I had a lot of good times listening to my arena rock records. Until I started paying attention to

them. That's when the confusion set in. I understood, for example, that Grand Funk Railroad were kidding when they sang "We're an American Band," but why did they feel compelled to pose nude for the album cover? And Journey, were they auditioning for *National Lampoon* when they wrote the song "Hustler":

"I get beside women all men  
desire  
Crazy with passion I'll never  
be tired  
Money's no good to me"

# ARENA

'cause lovin's my game  
I don't need no trouble and I'll  
show you no pain  
I move like a lover, so silent and  
swift  
Screamin' women love me, just  
can't resist  
I can't be bought, your payoff's  
no good  
So lock up your women, like you  
know you should'

I think .38 Special spoke for many in the field of arena rock when they sang "I ain't no messiah/But I'm close enough for rock'n'roll" ("Rockin' Into the Night").

It was the first Boston album that confirmed my suspicions that arena bands believed too much of their hype. I think Boston wanted to save us. They told us in songs like "Feelin' Satisfied" ("Nothin's gonna help you more than rock'n'roll") and they showed us on their record covers, which laid out the game plan for Boston's cult-like mission. Boston's first album cover depicted the band escaping from an exploding planet, presumably ours, flying across the universe in the Starcruiser Boston. *Earth's too small for us, too confining; Our rock'n'roll necessitates the infinite expanse of outer space—we gotta break free.* Their second album showed the Starcruiser Boston preparing to land in the valley of a new world, searchlights blazing, scanning the surface for squares who might impede on the band's pursuit of a good time. This imagined intergalactic outpost would be a place where the band and a select few—hot mammas, dope dealers, maybe a guitar tech or two—could safely rock out, pilgrims for the modern age, without the mess of persecution or convictions or hardships. As a fan, all I could do was hope to be among

those who ascended into the heavens with Boston before earth met its demise.

Progressive rock bands agreed that rock music was a spectator sport, but they varied the message: you lack the talent to do what we do. They took listeners back in time with mystical lyrics about knights and damsels. Clad in flowing robes, they replaced riffs with interludes and played in the most unconventional time signatures possible. Prog rockers didn't play instruments so much as operate them, twiddling and modulating and monitoring. They resembled NASA technicians as they launched the most cumbersome compositions, eight-minute songs mere preludes to suites that consumed entire album sides and were broken into movements noted with Roman numerals—the song listings reminded me of outlines for high school history papers. Prog rockers were to be taken seriously and I loved them for it, the more complicated their songs the better.

No more grounded than their arena rock brethren, prog rock bands were stranger. They too enjoyed getting wasted and getting laid, but I assumed that there was at least one guy in the band who would stay up late at night studying *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or setting *Beowulf* to 7/4 time. This was the same guy, usually the lead singer or the flutist, who failed to realize that it wasn't his recitation of Hobbit history that turned on the groupies. ("Gather round, ladies, for I've a tale to tell, a tale from the Red Book, a tale of Bandobras Took, son of Isengrim the Second, a mere four feet, five, and yet able to ride a horse!")

Prog rock bands wanted to enlighten audiences with long-winded concept albums. A noble goal perhaps, but their tales were impenetrable. Recognizing that most of their fans were mere mortals,

prog rockers offered their version of Cliffs Notes, attempting to provide clarity. Genesis offered a novella expounding upon the intricacies of *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. Yes used their liner notes to connect the dots between their exploration of Shastric scripture and the legendary *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, one movement broken into four parts and spread across four sides of vinyl, including this pithy nugget of a lyric from "The Revealing Science of God": "Dawn of light between a silence and solid sources/Chased amid fusions of wonder in moments hardly seen forgotten/Coloured in pastures of chance dancing leaves cast spells of challenge/Amused but real in thought, we fled from the sea whole." (Which sounds more like William Shatner every time I read it.) Was this really progress from the days of "Maybellene, why can't you be true" or merely a clumsy regression to Gregorian chant?

The most perplexing of the concept albums was Emerson, Lake and Palmer's *Tarkus*. True to their prog rock nature, ELP included a set of illustrations to guide listeners through the labyrinth-like tale of *Tarkus*. The first panel shows a volcanic eruption spewing forth an enormous egg, which cracks and yields the title character who is half armadillo and half Sherman tank. Tarkus roams alone. He approaches a pod city, whose citizens send forth a probe. Does the probe come in peace? Does it seek conflict? Tarkus destroys the pod before its intentions are revealed, standing over its smoldering remains, both gun barrels smoking. Then a mecha-pterodactyl, half dinosaur, half B-52 bomber, descends from the clouds. Is he friend? Is he foe? It's irrelevant because Tarkus' anger issues surface again and the mecha-pterodactyl is soon dead, followed by the next causality, a submarine with long

# PROG

grasshopper-like legs. The final foe is the dreaded manticore, a lion with the face of a gorilla and a metallic scorpion tail. Manticore cuts Tarkus' eye and though the winner is unclear, the battle with Manticore takes its toll on Tarkus. As the illustrations come to a close we see Tarkus standing in the surf, the waves gently lapping at his treads. His guns have cooled and he gazes to the horizon, lost in thought.

That explains, or at least accounts for, most of the songs on side one, which ends with an instrumental called "Aquatarkus." After all he has endured, Tarkus, the ultimate terrestrial killing machine/animal moves into the marine world for further mayhem. Having conquered land and sea, could flight be next? Was Interstellar Tarkus to follow? And what did Tarkus seek? Truth? Destruction? A warm embrace to fend off the nagging notion that we spin randomly in a godless universe? Did he choose to kill or was he programmed that way? Did Tarkus represent mankind?

As with arena rock, prog rock, ultimately, was an empty experience that left me with questions I didn't want to consider. I could not relate to pre-historic armadillo tanks any more than I could imagine escaping via the Starcruiser Boston. It was time to borrow some records from Leon.

HOW BEST TO ACCOMMODATE  
THE FAN UNABLE TO READ?  
COWBELLS.



# TARKUS

# HOW TO FIGHT FOR A SKATE PARK

BY TODD TAYLOR

PHOTOS BY MARY CLARE STEVENS  
& TODD TAYLOR

ART JUNK BY AMY ADOYZIE

## THE POLITICS OF CONCRETE

I've never enjoyed anxious crowds, getting hit with flying objects, or cops, so going to large political protests has never been high on my priorities. Yet, I consider myself politically active and informed.

Years back, Sean Carswell and I interviewed the historian Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*. Zinn reaffirmed what I'd been thinking for a long time: political resistance can be personal journey and it can take many forms. It's not only the cocked arm ready to throw a Molotov through a window. It can equally be a writer, collecting the stories of the disenfranchised and threading them together into a varied banner of dissent.

It's been said that citizens can flex most of their political muscle locally. I have a lot of pride for where I live, Highland Park, Northeast Los Angeles. It's like a small town surrounded by a big city. I don't want to "improve" it, in the gentrification, douchebagish, SUV, Guzzle-a-latte, hundred dollar shoe boutique, beers-over-five-dollars-in-a-bar sense. I wanted to attempt to improve it in a civic way.

There's a kid downstairs. He's a bit of a butt-munch and he's spent many a three-hour session of bouncing a rubber ball against the other side of the wall where I work. He's a pretty typical kid for the area: shiftless, cranky, bored, and raised on TV. Although he annoys me, he's emblematic of the reason I wanted to help get a quality skatepark made in my neighborhood.

I'd be a liar if I said that I only fought for a skatepark here on lofty principle. I wanted something I'd have fun skating, something to invite my friends to, something challenging. I wanted to fight for something that would improve, if even by a small degree, the quality

of life for the folks who live around me. It was a fight for something as real as concrete.

## GEOGRAPHY LESSON

Los Angeles is like the fall of Rome, but instead of lead pipes, it's bureaucracy. Three and a half years ago, I caught wind that there was a skatepark proposed two blocks away from my apartment. Immediately, visions of Dreamland and Grindline—two of the most highly regarded skatepark builders in the U.S.—danced in my head like dual concrete snake runs.

Los Angeles County is not Washington, Oregon, or Idaho; it isn't even like the rest of California. It believes it's its own country. It's the most populous county in the United States—over ten million documented folks—yet it can't compete with cities that border it in terms of skateparks. In February of 2004, it had one marginal concrete skatepark, Pedlow. What was working beyond city lines didn't matter. To the bureaucrats, anywhere else might as well be Mars or Tijuana.

My friend—the Ambassador—and I walked over to our first meeting in the local middle school classrooms across the street. The event was called Skate Summit and the question proposed was: "Does Highland Park want a skatepark?" It seemed like a rhetorical enough question. In the ten block radius of the school, I'd estimate that there are over one hundred skaters, most of whom have never skated anywhere except the street: in traffic, in parking lots, in front of houses and stores. The kids at the meeting ranged from wary to mildly hostile throughout the morning. When something was said they agreed to, they wagged their decks over their heads. Otherwise, they largely



acted disinterested, like they'd seen this song and dance before. Basically, they acted how kids usually behave when they find themselves in school on a Saturday.

#### ULL THEM ASLEEP

*City Technique #1*

I should note that when I mention "The City," it's a collection of all The City of Los Angeles branches: Recreation and Parks, Department of Engineering, Council District 14, Office of the Mayor, the list goes on. They can move in a herd or in small groups, but very rarely alone.

The Summit was a meeting open to the entire community. Whoever says that skating's no longer considered dangerous should spend a morning with ordinary "concerned citizens" during the skatepark proposal process because, deep in their hearts when it may hit close to their property values, skateboarding equates with drug-using, satan-worshiping, graffiti-happy gang bangers. (Drug use was repeatedly cited as the reason why there could never be a bowl at the skatepark. Way too easy to rip some bingers down there, out of sight from the cops.)

The Summit continued with a slide show by a veteran graffiti artist. Although the dude's skulls were cool and his stuff was well received, I didn't quite grasp what he had to do with skating. In the meetings to come, there were often weird curveballs in an attempt to bro down with the kids.

Near the end, there was a question-and-answer session. A well-meaning lady suggested art projects at the skatepark: "A place for kids to take apart their boards and paint their decks!"

There was polite applause from the adults and snickering from anyone who skated.

I signed up to be on the "community design committee" list that was passed around. The City would never use that list.

We were about to find out that The City already had their plan. The meeting was mostly playacting, a tick in a column on a spreadsheet: "Community wants skatepark!"

It ended with a homeless guy yelling about wanting restrooms in the park. The dude had a point. If you don't play in a Little League, who controls access to the john, there's no polite way to huck a whiz in the area.

#### IF YOU THINK SOMEONE HAS NO PULL, TREAT THEM AS YOU WOULD THE MILDLY RETARDED, THEN BLANK FACE

*City Techniques #2 and #3*

At the second community meeting, my hopes were still up. I've never lived within a skatable distance to a concrete park. I was ready to fight... in a polite, calm manner. I put on my collared shirt and brushed my teeth. I felt all kung-fu'y.

I'm pretty used to being treated like a moron. The City obliged in the following fashion: when community members are hypnotized by your spinning wheels of protocol, reveal your plan—that's really a statement—in the form of a question. Then include many "options" (for that feel-good glow of "community empowerment"). If constituents disagree with you, talk to them like they're deaf, slow, and speaking another language.

I was horrified that their "options for design" were little more than different reconfigurations of the same modular park. The drill is to lay down a slab of concrete (picture a parking lot), plop metal and wood structures on top. Voilà. Very expensive suckage that's noisy and breaks.

The Ambassador and I were indignant. We came to discuss a skatepark, not a playground. This injustice wouldn't stand. We were then exposed to...

#### "MOVING FORWARD" MEANS IGNORING THE QUESTION

*City Technique #4*

I raised my hand. "What about a purely concrete park with transition and bowls? I think..."

I was stopped cold by a lady who reminded me of a mean-ass, robotic Margaret Cho. She was backed up by a lady whose talent was public relations-style Teflon whose catch phrase was saying, "I know exactly what you mean," but obviously not listening to anything that countered The City's plan.

"We've already discussed the design aspects of the park," Cho-bot said. "This is not the meeting for that. We must move forward."

Community members stink eyed the Ambassador and me. They revealed to me later that they were thinking two things when we first crossed paths: "Who are these jokers and why do they want to steal the park away from the kids?" It had taken two years of fighting for the community members to get to this stage in the negotiations and some clowns weren't going to waltz right in and yoink it away from them. Fair enough.

The City bureaucrats sensed this discontent and immediately tried to turn the community against the Ambassador and me, insinuating that we were pros, had a vested interest, and worked for a competing skatepark company. (None of which are remotely true. "Ma'am," I said, "I'm not being coy with you. I can barely grind.") Apparently, Cho-bot had a hard time conceiving that people could be interested in a project who couldn't make money directly off of it, nor want to reap any "community" points.

The City acted like something being revealed officially to the community for the first time had already been discussed at length, that it was a foregone conclusion, and that I was wasting their time.

"Ladies, I just wanna skate a park without having to drive to it. In thirty-five years, that's never happened. The Ambassador and I are the only two community members in this room who'll actually be skating this thing."

Community member Rick Alaniz stood up, frustrated with Teflon, directed his aggravation at her. "We've been waiting seven months with unanswered questions."

Many community members in attendance were obviously distraught. Up until the Skate Summit, the City had openly resisted the idea of a skatepark at every juncture.

"There are people in the community who are opposed to the park. We have to take them in consideration, too," said Cho-bot out of seemingly nowhere.

"Who?" Rick asked, neck tightening.

"It doesn't matter who they are, Rick. People in the community," replied Cho-bot.

Rosa Rivas, another community member in attendance, had collected the signatures of each and every home and business owner with a sightline to the park. Before signing, she took them through what the skatepark would mean for the community as a whole and what to expect of the new visitors to their neighborhood. Each and every home and business owner signed the petition. The City had a copy of that list on their clipboard.

"People, Rick. Other people," Cho-bot repeated. "You're not the only ones...."

Cho-bot and Teflon's vagueness was maddening. Many community members were visibly sputtering. How could people who didn't show up to a meeting, didn't have to speak publicly, didn't even have to be named or answer direct questions, have as much weight in the balance for the skatepark as those who'd fought so hard just for the *idea* of it?

The meeting ended abruptly in the middle of a heated discussion. The room was scheduled for another group who brought juice boxes and a man was busy writing something about anger management on the dry erase board. It was agreed that The City would contact the makers of the modular skateparks to see if they were willing to meet directly with the community in a week or two.

Over the next several months, we would painfully find out that there were going to be no direct answers to any of our questions.

### DUDE, DON'T BE AN ASSHOLE

*The First Smart Thing for a Skater to Do*

Good folks can often be frightened by things they don't understand. Don't just give 'em the finger, complain, "If I have to explain, you'll never understand!" then cry along to a Smiths record. Take your time—without swearing—to explain what the fuck you're talking about. I loaded up my information ammo belt. I researched and brushed up on the difference between concrete vs. modular skateparks in reputable, skate-neutral magazines, took pictures and made diagrams that explained what I was talking about, and made a thick, informative packet with stuff like, "In the United States today, there are a million more skateboarders than baseball players."

I also went on the attack against the proposed skatepark builder. I've watched *Animal House* enough times to understand that the best way to get anything stupid, inspired, and against-all-odds done is to have allies. Just as Pluto couldn't have sabotaged the parade all by

himself; he needed 10,000 marbles. The Ambassador and I needed to show that we weren't two independent jackasses, but part of Team Highland Park.

There's this thing called the interweb. It's full of info on how to rip off Coke machines or make every traffic light you approach turn green ([i-hacked.com](http://i-hacked.com)), but there are also government and corporate documents there. And, as it turned out, Spohn Ranch was its own best enemy. It boasted way too much. The Ambassador and I went to their locally placed skateparks. We took pictures of their indefinitely-closed-for-repairs-after-two-years, looks-like-a-prison-yard in Lincoln Heights four miles away. We winced at the parking lot of jank in Sunland with wood extensions nailed on. We photographed all the splits, breaks, blisters, and holes in their material, Skatelite, which claimed to "withstand the constant punishment inflicted by determined riders." Not just complainers, we photographed concrete parks nearby (but not technically in Los Angeles)—Glendale and Duarte—and explained why and how they worked. In the packet, we pressed that a skatepark respected by skaters and the community could be made with the money available.

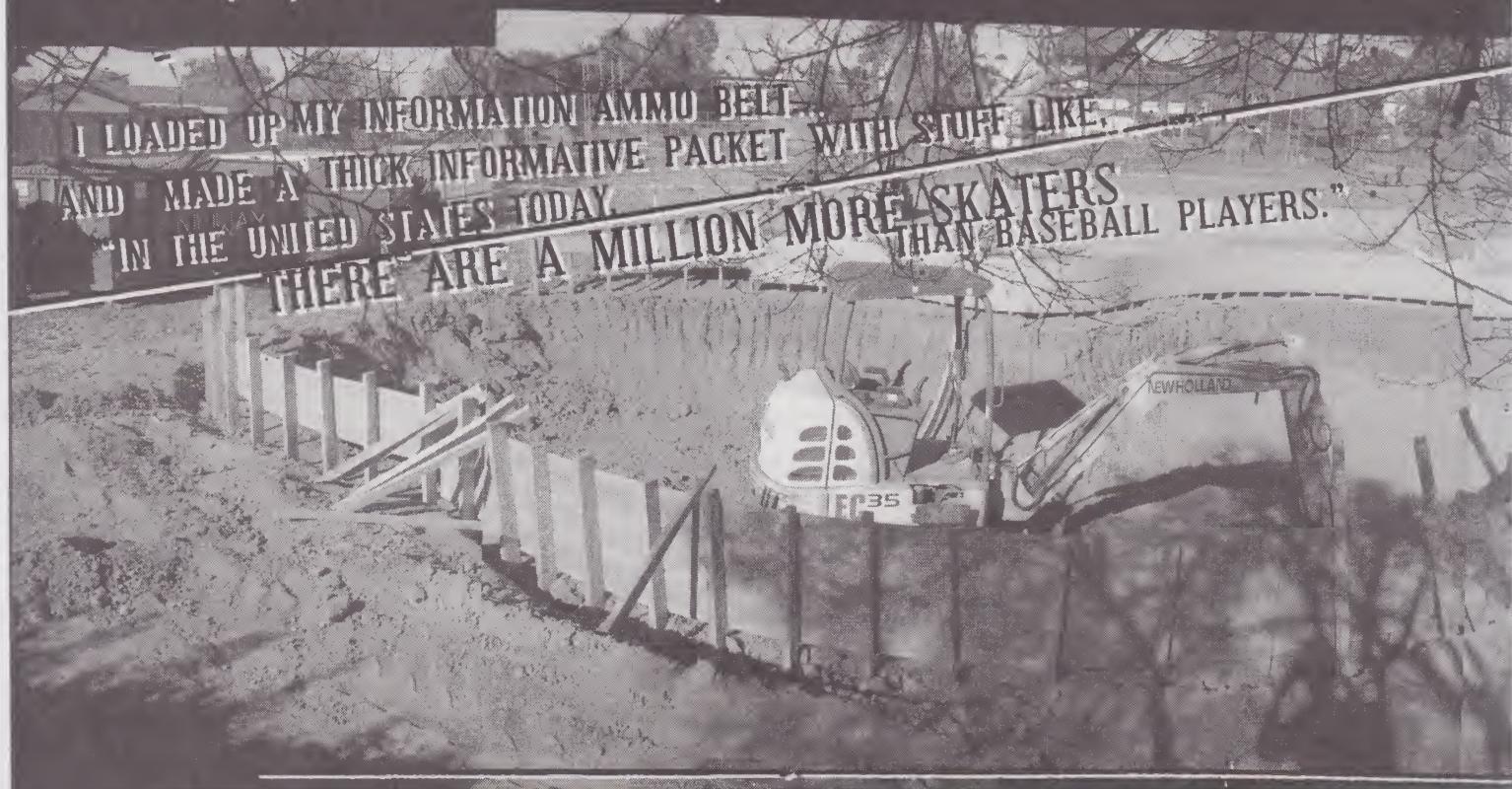
### KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DICKERY AND BRAVERY

*The Second Smart Thing for a Skater to Do*

Know the difference between just being a dick and being brave. Save up your jackassery because The City bureaucrats seem to instinctively know how to push skaters' buttons. When The Ambassador and I walked into the second "design" meeting, I didn't ask if I could hand out packets, I just did. I had to calculate my impact. Cho-bot and Teflon looked like I was handing them used diapers.

I let the modular playground equipment representatives of Spohn Ranch put their proposal on the table. It was what we'd predicted: a fancy brochure about how modularity provides skaters with an "endless variety" of skatepark configurations: "Get bored? Move it around!" (A good response to this is always, "How about one good design at the beginning?") They bragged that their parks were scaled-down versions of the X Games, and those are big with the kids and on TV, right? "That's what the pros use! It's the best!" "When The Gap wanted to tap the action sports market, they came to us." We let it slide that it makes no sense for a traveling circus of skaters to have fresh concrete poured at every stop on their circuit, since most of those things are in stadiums and parking lots.

Shaking my DIY packet and not waiting to be called on after Spohn's presentation, I stood up. "All I'm asking for is that



THE CITY BUREAUCRATS INSINUATED THAT WE WERE PROS, HAD A VESTED INTEREST,  
NONE OF WHICH ARE REMOTELY TRUE.  
"MA'AM," I SAID. "I'M NOT BEING COY WITH YOU.  
I CAN BARELY GRIND."

the community should have real input into the design process."

"We're not shutting anybody out," Cho-bot responded as she simultaneously gave me the "talk to the hand" gesture while tucking the packet into the bottom of her stack of papers. What she didn't say was that The City had already picked its designer without consulting the community.

Luckily, The Ambassador and I were able stick enough of a splinter of doubt into the community members' minds to spur a City-hosted field trip to some nearby concrete parks. We were hoping to make that splinter a wedge.

#### VAGUELY ANSWER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS *City Technique #5*

It was there, visiting nearby concrete parks, when these pearls dropped from the Spohn Ranch reps' lips. We would come to nickname him Soft Wood.

"A half a bowl of Skatelite is 'almost' like a full bowl."

"Falling on Skatelite is 'softer' than concrete."

"See. Concrete has cracks, too!"

City officials totally skewed their questions to kids. Highland Park has very little "naturally" occurring transition. (Transition is a skateable arc that goes from horizontal to vertical.) If all you know is curbs, sidewalks, and a rail dragged out into the middle of the street, the answer to: "How do you like transition compared to a stair set?" has already been answered by the question.

It was obvious that The City was listening to us with ears wide shut. You could say they took pride in having their heads up their asses, but I'm trying to be nice here.

#### NO-BID CONTRACTS AND MONOPOLIES ARE DANGEROUS *It's a Problem in Government, Both Local and Federal*

It slowly dawned on us that Spohn Ranch, although they had not "officially" been signed on as the manufacturer of the skatepark, were the only skatepark manufacturing representatives at both the design meetings and the short tour of two concrete skateparks. Digging deeper, we also found out that Spohn Ranch was not only a division of a playground manufacturer, Gametime, it had a virtual skatepark monopoly in The City, had donated monies to the mayor's campaign, and had made over a handful of holding pens cleverly marketed as skateparks in the area. They planned to roll right through East L.A. and crap out the prefab parks in their wake in the name of "building communities." Spohn Ranch thought they had it all sewn up.

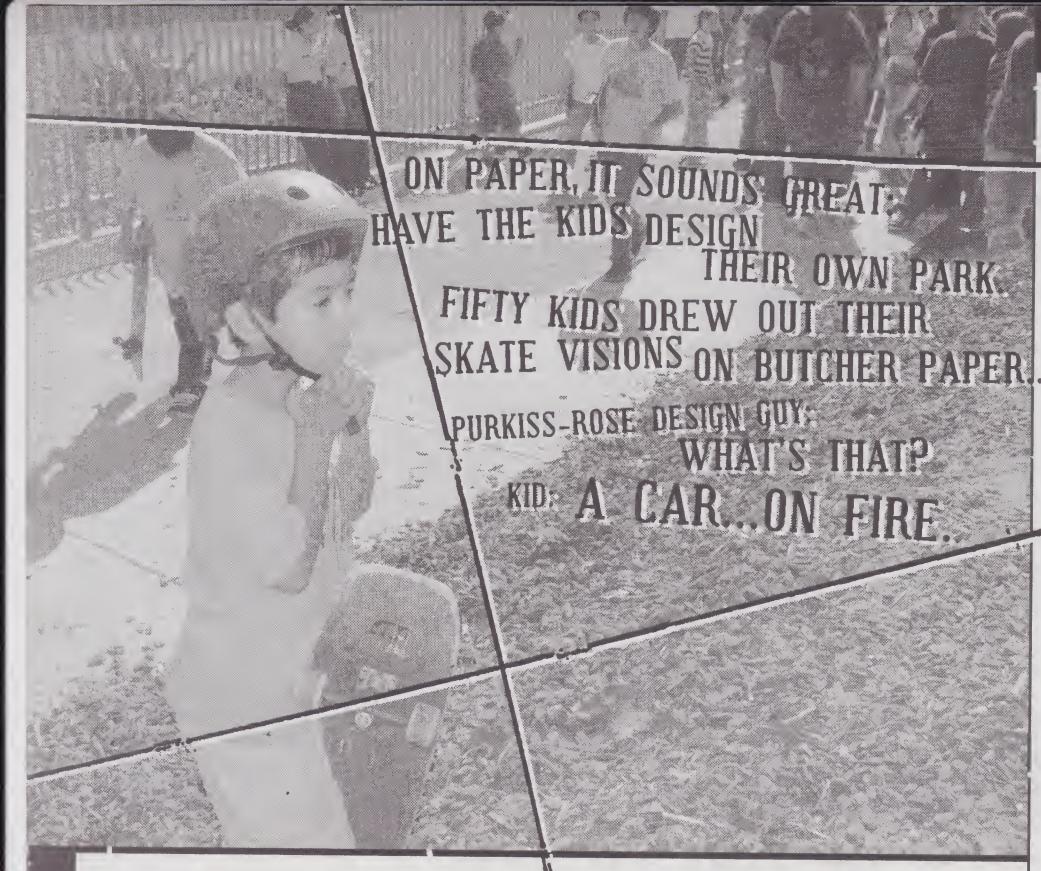
#### BEFRIEND SENIOR CITIZENS

*The Third Smart Thing for a Skater to Do*

It's ironic: I made friends with a lot of people who, if they tried to skate, would shatter a hip. They were all older members of the community, many church-goers, professors, and local business people genuinely interested that the kids get a quality place for recreation, feeling like they were living in the neglected shadow of communities like Santa Monica and Glendale. Many of them were retired. All of them were absolutely supportive of the Ambassador and me after we educated them about concrete skateparks. The Highland Park Skate Park Coalition was formed.

Months later, after adept wrangling by our new-found friends in the community, another design meeting was called by The City. "Wood or Concrete?" was the question.





ON PAPER, IT SOUNDS GREAT.  
HAVE THE KIDS DESIGN  
THEIR OWN PARK.  
FIFTY KIDS DREW OUT THEIR  
SKATE VISIONS ON BUTCHER PAPER.  
PURKISS-ROSE DESIGN GUY:  
WHAT'S THAT?  
KID: A CAR...ON FIRE.

The tide had turned. When the votes were tallied, we spanked wood good. Something like forty-eight to one. I won't lie, there was some amount of satisfaction when Aaron Spohn, the owner of Spohn Ranch, offered to give us his home address so we could drive over there and punch him in the face.

But, knowing that The City can screw up skateparks at any point in the long process—from the type of park to make, to designing the park, to actually building it correctly—it felt like we'd merely cleared the first hurdle. We hadn't finished the race. Although it was a step in the right direction, it'd be foolhardy to claim outright victory this early on.

The concrete version of Spohn Ranch in this area is Purkiss-Rose. Here's how L.A. sucks something special. They claim, "Any California Licensed General Contractor can bid on public bids." But the fine print is that they only select "one of the firms that they already have a multi-year contract with." Also, skateparks aren't considered "specialized projects"—like golf courses are—so it's really difficult for an out-of-town company to get a bid. Basically, it's The City's nice rhetorical trick of never completely showing their hand, while claiming complete transparency. Solely to place a bid with The City, there's a befuddling amount of politics, thinly veiled cronyism, and ignorance to deal with. With one tenth of the effort and headache, respected companies like Grindline and Dreamland can make parks in other states. Hell, the government agencies in Idaho all but rolled out the red carpet for 'em, while L.A. seems to want to make skateparks completely out of red tape. It boiled down to this: even though Grindline stated that if we could get a design/build contract going, they would design the park for free and build it for that price. The City flatly rejected their offer. Goodbye Grindline dreams. Purkiss-Rose—widely known in skating circles as Darth Vader of skatepark designers—was to design the park... and the landscaping... and the kiddie area.

"See?" they implied, "A skatepark's nothing specialized. We're trained professionals. You've got nothing to worry about."

Months lapsed. The City then announced the first community concrete skatepark design meeting. Kids: Bless, 'em, and I can't blame them; they'd been lied to most of their lives by The City about this skatepark again and again. They were fed up and started slithering out as soon as the meeting began. Hell, if I was in their shoes and had their talent, I'd be skating the stair sets in front of the school instead of sitting through the noise, drainage, and environmental impact studies that started off the meeting.

On paper, it sounds great: have the kids design their own park.

Purkiss-Rose design guy: "Use this sheet of paper. Draw anything you'd like."

Fifty kids drew out their skate visions on the butcher paper provided. Some ideas were solid, but the impact of video games became apparent.

Purkiss-Rose design guy: "What's that?"

Kid: "A car... on fire."

Purkiss-Rose design guy: "Great. Draw it in. There are no bad ideas."

Awesome. Not possible—but awesome.

Yet, when "car on fire" is given equal time consideration in skatepark design with diagrams and ideas shot back and forth between me and *Thrasher's* finest, it's more than a

little disconcerting. El Beardo—one of the lead brains behind San Pedro's Channel St. Project who I'd been filling in on all of the advancements—attended the meeting and felt like he'd come in too late in the process to change much. To him, it felt like minds had been made up, that we could fight for little design tweaks, but not how the skatepark would flow as a whole.

It's funny. I felt the same, like all of the large decisions at every stage of the skatepark were done without—or even in direct defiance of—community members' input. And I'd come in at the beginning of the design process. The City had an amazing talent of holding up a sign that, on one side, said, "Tell us your ideas! You're important," but on the back of the sign was scrawled "Take what we give you! It's better than nothing." And their sign was becoming more and more transparent.

## ASK PROFESSIONALS "YOU GET PAID FOR THAT?"

### *The Second Community Concrete Design Meeting*

Let me point out here that everyone on The Highland Park Skate Park Coalition was a volunteer and spent over several hundred hours apiece staying on top of the situation throughout this entire process. (This included approximately twenty meetings on how to deal with The City.)

On the other side, Purkiss-Rose, a "design" company was paid tens of thousands of dollars to come up with a mostly baffling what-have-you.

Kudos for including a kidney bowl (think of a skatable pool without water: very fun). But they put a fence around it. Inside of a park that had a fence around it. Such a horrible idea. One, great, it feels more like a prison. Two, an interior fence in a skatepark effectively cuts off the "flow" from one area to another, making the park "feel" much smaller than its square footage. weirdly, the selling point for the bowl by pro skater and Purkiss-Rose crony Frank Hirata was that it had a nautical theme. "You know, like the beach. That's a lifesaver." Jesus, dude, I thought. Where are your priorities?

Purkiss-Rose also introduced an "innovation" to what's known as a skate pavilion. Instead of the traditional stepped tiers, they inverted the design, resulting in something that looked quite like a shallow toilet bowl. It was obvious to me that this feature would serve little more than a crash-up derby/kid-maimer since skaters coming from opposite directions—and not aware of one another—could end up in the center at the same time. No bueno.

Oh, I objected... how in the samhill was that even skatable, not to mention any good?

## PERFECT THE QUIET ART OF TAPPING OUT

### *The Fourth Smart Thing for a Skater to Do*

When you get really fucking pissed at these meetings in public, use the buddy

system. (This only works if you're not both worked up at the same time.) The Ambassador and I had a simple system. If one of us was getting a little red, stammering, or on the verge of losing our shit, all we needed was a tap on the shoulder. We'd finish our sentence, stop, and collect ourselves.

But, The City was a little of ahead of us. It learned from its mistakes by making sure that, in subsequent community meetings, the only way a member of the general public could become a "speaker" at the meeting was to fill out a card *prior* to the meeting and then be restricted to two minutes.

#### UNDERSTAND THE FOLLOWING DIAGRAM: THIS IS MY THUMB. THIS IS MY COLLEAGUE'S ASS.

*City Technique #6*

I went to too many meetings. I went to meetings about meetings. It was during this grey time where more things broke loose, bit by painful bit.

Costs to make anything in L.A. are impenetrably high. The main culprit blamed was China. It seems that America's on the losing end of that brilliant trade agreement, and every time The City showed us a blueprint, the cost of concrete and rebar kept shooting up. Los Angeles is a great place to live if you never have to pee or shit. Current price for a public bathroom in Los Angeles—nothing fancy, mind you—is \$300,000. It's \$23,000 for security lights. \$2,000 for a plaque (and the plaque holder) so you'll never forget who held the purse strings, \$110,000 for the guard shack, and the list goes on.

Members of the skatepark coalition attended an "emergency" mid-afternoon design meeting downtown—by The City's request and on their schedule—only to find that the engineer who initiated the meeting wasn't actually going to show up. When he was called by his staff and put on speaker phone, we discovered that he was in traffic, and apparently not headed toward the meeting. Graciously, he offered to "pull over and look at the plans." My taxes pay that dude.

Tony Hawk pulled through for us. Here's the Birdman's haiku about the skatepark design at that moment (which still featured the toilet bowl): "This looks like a disaster waiting to happen. Bad design." His foundation donated \$1,000 to the skatepark.

We showed The City the fax. The design was fundamentally changed shortly after. Our councilman announced that an additional \$500,000 had been allocated to the Garvanza Skatepark Project, stating that it was the direct result of the advocating of the skate park coalition and its supporters. He gave us a pat on the back.

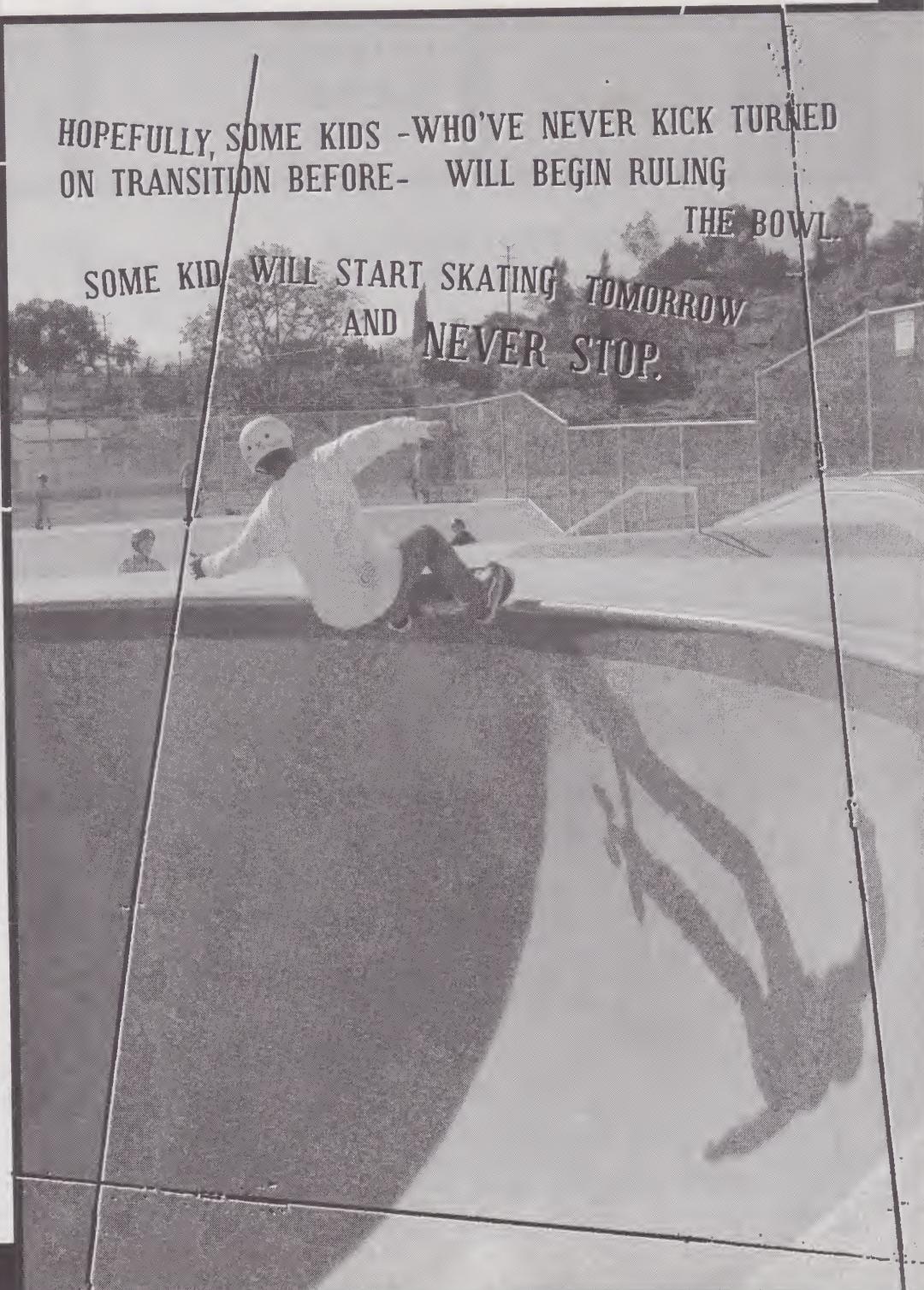
More months passed. A mysterious "funding gap" opened up and prevented the park from being built. And then... nothing.

Tumbling tumbleweeds. During this time, The City—an endless collection of departments and divisions—was in upheaval. Our councilman, Antonio Villaraigosa (who, in our direct dealings with the skatepark, is anything but the "democratic Latino superstar" he's touted to be) became mayor. The bureaucratic deck was again shuffled.

#### PLACING BOULDERS IN THE FIELD OF DREAMS

*When Landscaping Whispers "Fuck You"*

It had been a dirt field for over two decades. Little bit of a slope. Before any attention was lent to it, almost every weekend, there'd be an elaborate handball game being played with ten middle-aged



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# CHINESE TELEPHONES

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men on each side. I couldn't ever figure out the rules of the game, but completely understood that The City didn't want them pissing in the bushes that lined one side of the park. So, in an open field, one day, the city plopped a bunch of boulders in such a manner that a nice, wide field was totally unusable for any team sport. The boulders are hard to mow around and get tagged all the time.

In one of the corners of the field was the proposed site of the skatepark.

It was during this darkening time where, I said, many times, "Fuck it. I give up. I can drive fifteen minutes to another park." I just didn't feel like tilting any more windmills in the name of community service.

The dirt of the proposed skatepark remained untouched.

Eight months later, I got a call from one of the community members. The park was back up on the radar. The main change in plan was that the project was shifted into the Department of Engineering in an effort to save on costs. Not necessarily good news. The City had made one park previously, the only concrete skatepark in L.A. I'd already "had words" with dude in charge of its construction.

**Me:** "Robert, every time it rains, Pedlow park floods. Why aren't there drains in it?"

**Robert:** "Drains are in that park."

**Me:** "Okay, technically, but they aren't hooked up to pipes."

**Robert:** No answer.

Robert has since landed a promotion and advanced to another City job. Bravo.

The City had agreed that they would build the last agreed-upon skatepark plan. No one could disclose what the final compromise had been; it'd been sliced, diced, reconfigured, expanded, and contracted so many times that they could have built it any one of ten ways, depending on the date of the blueprints they were holding. No design was on display the day of the ground breaking ceremony.

What I do know is that \$1.4 million doesn't buy as much as you think it would in L.A. California Skateparks started construction, and after concrete had been poured, we were invited to have a look-see. The finalized plan was a compromise. At one time, the park was to be built in two phases. The end result is a little weird because it's literally cut down to as big as the funds on hand. But, they made the bowl to spec. Peeling back the burlap over the curing concrete revealed a nice amoeba-shaped bowl—one of El Beardo's recommendations that was an improvement on the kidney shape—six feet deep in the shallow and nine feet in the deep, terra cotta tile, with six inches of vert and Federal pool coping all around. Real close to what we'd asked for.

After the concrete cured, it was instantly getting carved.

I kept on visiting the park, walking around it, thinking of what it looked like in my mind versus what I was seeing, still expecting it to disappear like a dream.

When I was up the street, getting beer and soymilk, the checkout woman, who knows I skate asked, "Did you hear what happened to the park yesterday?"

"It's finished," I said. "It's going to open soon."

"No, not that. Two kids hotwired the Bobcats that the construction crews left overnight and were arrested by the cops while jousting them in the field next to the park."

We both laughed. It's par for the course in Highland Park. Kids are bored. As I walked back home, I stopped by the park, just to look at it. Someone had taken a paint roller and tagged the entire length of it. The front gate was spread aside like a curtain. Apparently, the six padlocks The City had placed on the chain link entrance weren't enough to stop people from skating.

The natives were getting restless.

Days later, The City wised up and filled the park with sand, which thrilled the BMXers in the area.

Weeks passed and everything in a twenty-yard radius of the park got mercilessly tagged.

## LOOK LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING

*A Good Life Lesson*

I'm a lurker. I've gotten it from my Dad.

Passing by the unopened skatepark, I struck up a conversation

with a guy who asked me not to walk over the landscaping.

"When is it scheduled to open?" I asked, remarking on the pressure-washed concrete and aggressive graffiti removal that gave the concrete a nice sheen.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Concerned citizen. I'd like to skate it."

"Come back in an hour. Grand opening won't be for another week or so."

An hour later, I walked right in the middle of a group of obvious bureaucrats (they were admiring the new plaque; probably looking for their names) and asked, "Still on? Can we skate it?"

In that millisecond it takes to gain speed, to the first little hush of wheels clicking over tile, the bureaucratic rodeo became a distant memory. It's amazing how cleansing just shutting up and skating can be.

Hats off to California Skateparks' concrete-pouring abilities. The bowl's a rocket: deep, fast, big, smooth.

"How's it ride?" the builder asked.

"Better than I can skate it."

It's not perfect, but in a part of the world where it's surprising if The City can dig a hole in the ground for under \$5,000, I would have taken a lot worse.

A week later was the grand opening ribbon-cutting ceremony. The park was packed. Speeches were made. Kids were bored of the speeches, snickered at Dr. Dick Dyke's name, and became visually anxious for a chance to skate.

It was nice that the Highland Park Skatepark Coalition got its due during the speeches, yet it's always a little odd when the banners of community involvement are raised so high and wagged so vigorously by the same bureaucrats who consistently insulted and ignored the coalition, only to grudgingly accept—through constant badgering and being scrutinized in their practices—that a well-built skatepark would help the entire community of Highland Park.

A stampede of kids tore up the landscaping between the time the ribbon was cut and an attempt was made to enforce the mandatory helmet rule. Every inch of the park got christened by urethane wheels, baptized by barking trucks, and polished by the sweat of fallen skaters.

Finally, the second largest city in America, Los Angeles, got its third cement skatepark. (Another one, Belvedere, opened in East L.A. before the Garvanza park). There were many times when I truthfully didn't think we'd get this one, and I have to go walk over there to stare at it sometimes to make sure that it's really built, that all wasn't just some long dream.

I don't have any expansive statements to finish this off with. I don't feel like hugging everyone involved, but I feel good that I was part of a group that prevented skaters from getting the bare minimum. I feel good that, in some small, but real, way that I had some say in the concrete that got poured in my neighborhood and it wasn't for a new mega condo or in the name of gentrification. Hopefully, some kids—who've never kick turned on transition before—will begin ruling the bowl. Some kid will start skating tomorrow and never stop.

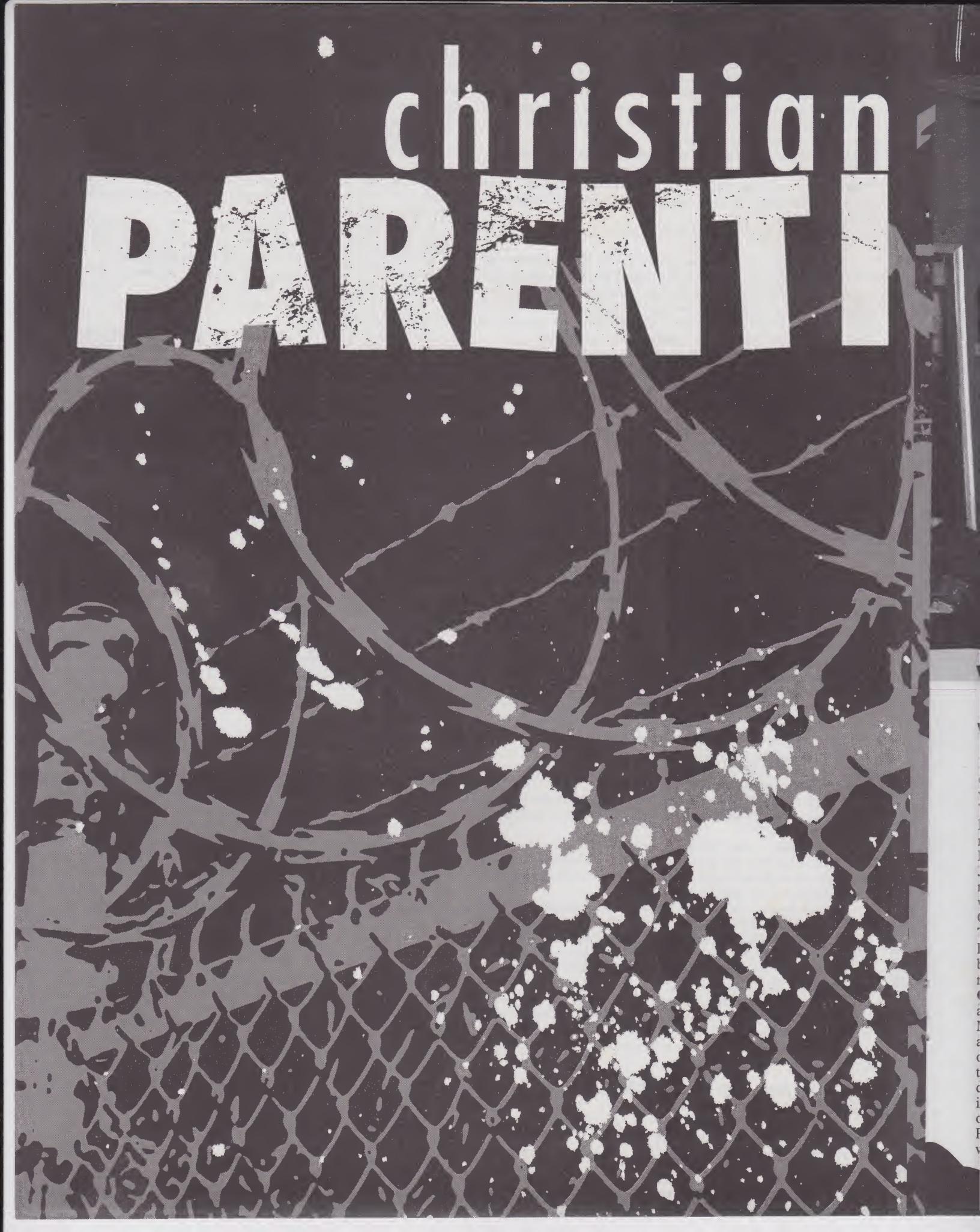
Mostly, it's nice to see that ordinary citizens, when tenacious enough, can positively change the environments in which they live; can stick their heads into the toothy political maw of one of the most frustrating bureaucracies ever created, and achieve a modest, but very real goal.

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Hats off to The Highland Park Skatepark Coalition and community members, Heinrich Keifer, Nancy Wyatt, Rosa Rivas, Rick and Irene Alaniz, Dr. Stan Moore, Michele Harnsberger, Dr. Dick Dyke; and skaters Andy Harris, Lance Mountain, and Ben Schroeder (even though I've never met the guy, I understand he yelled at the construction workers).



# christian **PARENTS**



# F

rom the American plains of the 1870s to the Philippines of the early 1900s to the Cold War-era conflicts in Vietnam, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia, military terror against civilian populations has been the central feature of American counterinsurgency.

-Christian Parenti, *The Freedom*

# C

hristian Parenti is an important writer. His well-researched and supported critiques of the prison-industrial complex (*Lockdown America*), unlawful surveillance (*The Soft Cage*), and the immoral wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (*The Freedom*, various articles for *The Nation*) are the types of dissident literature that's the bane of many ultra-wealthy corporate elites and the roguish Bush Administration's existence.

Rather than support repressive orthodoxies, Parenti challenges them—starting with his 1999 book *Lockdown America*, which uncovers America's ever-increasing Gulag-like prison system. Using hard facts and relentless logic to counteract decades of modern prison propaganda, Parenti uncovers what "hard on crime" really means by focusing in on whom it affects (people of color and those living in destitution), who supports it, and why they support it.

In 2003's *The Soft Cage*, Christian provides an eye-opening exposé of tracking and surveillance in the U.S. Starting with slavery and ending in the present, Parenti unveils how nefarious individuals and groups have treaded upon our supposed right to privacy guaranteed under the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Christian's latest book, *The Freedom*, is an invaluable guide to what's going on in Iraq. Unlike many lazy journalists (see Fox News), Parenti gives his first-hand, uninhibited account of the consequences of the War on Iraq. Christian catches all sides: U.S. soldiers forced to fight a war many do not believe in (or understand), Iraqi civilians living in squalor and fear, and even the resistance—whom Parenti interviews clandestinely in a one-hour cab ride. There is no better guide to what's going on in Iraq than *The Freedom*—at least by my radar. It's an added bonus that the book's an enjoyable read. At times humorous, but mostly pissed off, *The Freedom* is impossible to put down.

Christian Parenti does not take on pleasant subject matter. Prison, surveillance, and war are depressing (especially if your country is being bombed). What makes Parenti such an enjoyable writer is his humor, lucidity, and logic—the last attribute in short supply in America's corporate-run media. Underlying each of Parenti's books and articles is a commitment to human rights and the belief that we should, and could, live in a better world.

**INTERVIEW by RYAN LEACH  
LAYOUT by KEITH ROSSON  
ILLUSTRATIONS by KEITH ROSSON**

**Ryan:** I'm curious about you starting out with writing. Your father is (influential leftist historian) Michael Parenti. I think Noam Chomsky's father was a Wobbly; Chomsky talks about writing at an early age about fascism in Europe. What were some of your early writings? I imagine your father had a big impact on you.

**Christian:** My earliest writing was for radio. It was around the time of the first Gulf War and the wars in Central America were winding down. Some of the first reporting I did was on those issues. I did an internship at KPFA (KPFA is a listener-sponsored radio station located in Berkeley, California. KPFA broadcasts to the San Francisco Bay Area) in the early '90s and that's when I learned to become a journalist: in college. Yeah, I was raised in a political family. Then it was around the issue of Central America in the '80s, in high school, where I became politically aware in an adult way and politically active, to some extent. I traveled down to Central America—to Nicaragua and El Salvador and Guatemala—a bunch of times and reported on that. Actually, the first time I did any war reporting was in El Salvador. I visited the FMLN (left-wing Salvadoran guerilla group formed in 1980 to end oppression in El Salvador; now a major political party). This American from Vermont who I knew was with them, doing documentary work. Through that connection I hung out with them for two weeks. This was right in November of 1991 when they had declared a unilateral cease-fire. The FMLN were reserving the right to respond to government aggression, but they were no longer launching offensive operations. I went back there two years later after the peace process and did a series of radio features for Pacifica. That's how I got my start in politics and political writing.

**Ryan:** So it wasn't until your late teens

or early twenties that you were really galvanized into journalism?

**Christian:** Yeah. It was only in my late teens when I was approaching things with an adult sensibility. I'm actually really dyslexic and writing has always been really hard, so I did not write a lot in high school. It was sort of a struggle. It wasn't until I was twenty or twenty-one—when I had done those radio internships—that I had started writing. And I did it so as to learn how to write. As a child, my teachers would say, "Oh! He writes well, but he cannot spell."

**Ryan:** Yeah. I just recently read a book—I teach second grade—by a guy named Christopher Lee. He's severely dyslexic. I think he's going after a doctorate right now. He was talking about how he was dissuaded from a very early age from writing, that there was no prospect for him to write. It wasn't until later that he began to write. His story reminds me a little of yours.

**Christian:** It's a common affliction. But, thank God, computers help.

**Ryan:** That's what Lee stated as well. I was looking for Foucault at the library—that's how I came across you and your book, *Lockdown America*. I pulled it out and saw the back. Amy Goodman (host of "Democracy Now!") speaks highly of your work. So I thought, "Hey, this is worth checking out." I'm glad I did. In the preface to the book, you write about getting harassed by an undercover cop.

**Christian:** Just sort of mistaken identity.

**Ryan:** I know you are keenly aware of what was going on in terms of police brutality. Did that event set you in motion to write the book?

**Christian:** No. That event wasn't instrumental. I just thought it was a colorful way to start the book. I became

interested in criminal justice when I started writing because of three things: the crack epidemic, the war on drugs, and the L.A. riots—all those things combined in the late '80s and early '90s—culminating with the L.A. riots.

Doing Central America solidarity work in San Francisco, we would talk about the police and our mode. Our interpretation of what was happening was drawn from our experiences in Central America and our studying of Central America. But that was really inadequate. Seeing police operations against (United States) gangs—trying to see this in terms of state repression in Central America against unions—they're two totally different things. Organized political resistance by progressive forces against class exploitation and state violence is totally different than the state cracking down on criminal and possible criminal youth organizations. I didn't have a proper analysis to really understand and explain what in the hell was going on in American cities, so I started looking into these questions of police repression.

After the riots—the first piece I had ever published was after several years of doing journalism for radio, mainly for Pacifica—I wrote an article for *Z Magazine*. It was about DeWayne Holmes, who had really started the Crips/Blood gang truce, and then had been framed by the L.A.P.D., with possible help from the F.B.I. Mike Davis (influential historian, political activist, member of '60s new-left group Students for a Democratic Society, teacher at University of California, Irvine), Jerry Brown (former governor of California [1975-1983], current Attorney General for the State of California), and Maxine Waters (California Democratic Congresswoman [1991-present], co-sponsor of the House resolution to impeach Dick Cheney) all spoke at DeWayne's sentencing hearing and he was still given seven years for a ten dollar robbery.

**"He was still given seven years for a ten dollar robbery which he didn't commit. The whole thing was a setup. It was a COINTELPRO-style frame-up for a guy who was involved in bringing peace to South Central."**

which he didn't commit. The whole thing was a setup. It was a COINTELPRO-style frame up for a guy who was involved in bringing peace to South Central.

**Ryan:** Reminiscent of Fred Hampton sans the murder: a situation of collusion between the federal government and a city's police department.

**Christian:** Yeah. That was one big step into *Lockdown America*. And then I started reporting a lot on that: the question of criminal justice and state violence in the U.S. I would drop out of college frequently. I didn't finish college until I was twenty-five. I would drop out, move furniture, and then go travel in Central America, freelance as a journalist. So I finally finished college and I wrote my dissertation in college on policing and the politics of policing. Then I went to graduate school and got a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics. The same ideas that I had been trying to work out through this descriptive reportage, and my undergraduate thesis, I continued working on. I wrote a similar thesis in graduate school and, at the same time, wrote down *Lockdown America*. It was about an eight year process, trying to understand the very evident changes in everyday politics in my own country: the explosion of criminal justice in the '90s. The federal government was pouring money into policing.

**Ryan:** That's a major theme throughout *Lockdown America*. You write about Nixon starting all these bureaus and groups.

**Christian:** The LEAA (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) was his thing.

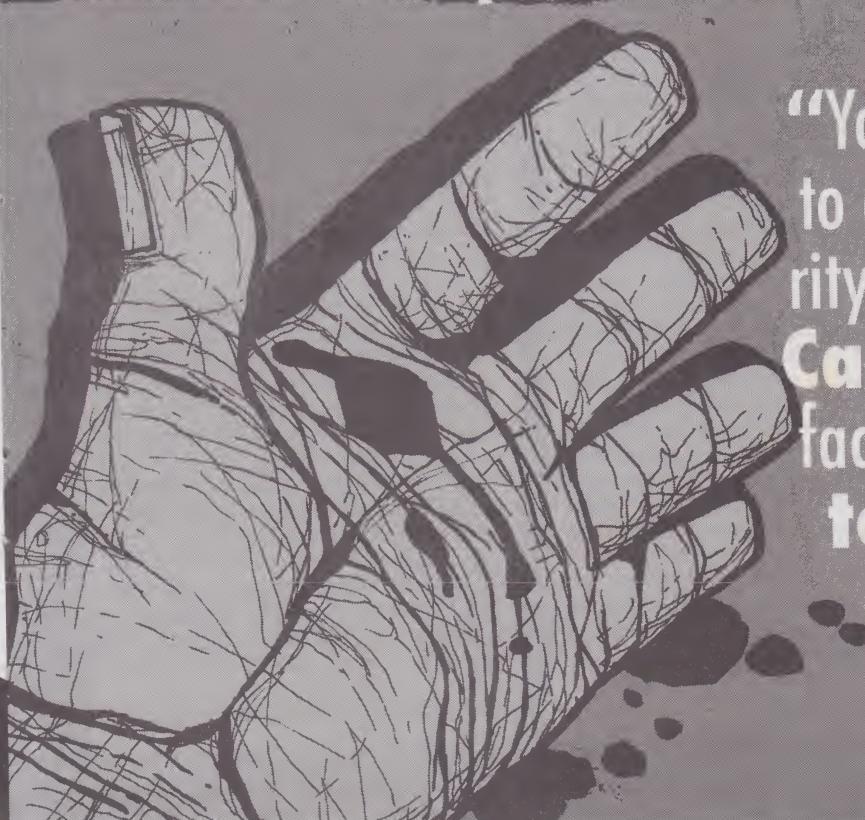
**Ryan:** And you also talk about RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act). I really appreciate how in depth you go with the subject, going all the way back to Barry Goldwater. Although

he didn't win against Lyndon Johnson, a lot of Goldwater's ideas were the new precedents that would follow, whether you were a Republican or a Democrat running for office.

**Christian:** His rhetoric won.

**Ryan:** The first time I had ever even heard of Barry Goldwater was through a Gil Scott-Heron song and listening to Fred Hampton speak. I have some clips of him. In one, Hampton says, "I might not be here. I might be in jail. I might be anywhere." It's amazing to me. He said that before the Pentagon Papers were released or COINTELPRO was exposed. The U.S. indoctrination system cannot be underestimated. These people—these dissident voices—were acutely aware of what was going on. They didn't need numbers or statistics. But, most people, they didn't—and still do not—even think of many of the issues you present or what Hampton and Heron knew about.

**Christian:** One point I make in *Lockdown America* was that this criminal justice buildup, though I saw it as illegitimate, was in response to a real crisis. First, to a political challenge: rioting, organized rebellion in the '60s. And then it was in response to the crisis of massive economic dislocation caused by Reaganomics. So the right wing wins the political battle in the '60s and then it launches an economic offensive (in the '80s). That economic offensive—cutting wages, cutting regulation, cutting taxes to the rich—lead to an explosion in poverty and a degradation of crucial public institutions such as schools and healthcare. There was a real crisis in the '80s and '90s that expressed itself in wild levels of gang violence and crack addiction. The kind of paramilitary response wasn't simply born out of the idea of the right wing wanting



"You don't actually have to give your Social Security number to **Master Card** or **Visa**. And let's face it: you don't have to have a credit card to begin with."

# "It's very hard to make a profit off of prisons. Private prisons have tried to cherry pick. They go after non-violent populations, like immigrants. In that regard, we think of private prisons as precursors to the whole privatization of warfare."

to crack down on people for the sake of cracking down on people; it was a desire to protect the theme park core of American cities as they were redeveloped. It was also a form of theatre to kind of punish and penalize the poor and display the poor as criminal to the rest of the society.

**Ryan:** Yeah, and in *The Soft Cage* you go back to the Wobblies. Something I found interesting, in public schools we don't talk about our labor history. You talk about the Wobblies in the '30s. I remember watching a documentary on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg where someone said, "You thought Berkeley was radical in the '60s? Go back to the City College of New York in the '30s and you would've seen something really happening." The American Communist Party was at its peak. And it seemed like government had to respond. Chomsky and Howard Zinn, among many others, stated in the late '30s and early '40s that there were government crackdowns—you had J. Edgar Hoover and union busting. It seemed like in the '80s that kept going, like what you write about in *Lockdown America*, to get rid of the superfluous population—that's when the idea of massive incarceration hit. The rates skyrocketed. The statistics you present are appalling of how you can go from a couple hundred thousand people in prison to where we're currently at: over two million people in prison.

**Christian:** Yeah. In jail and prison. (Jails are usually county or city run. They hold prisoners with sentences of one year or less or suspects accused of a crime [who, if convicted in a trial and sentenced to serve more than a year in a correctional facility, will likely be sent to a state prison]. State prisons are correctional facilities housing convicts for various crimes and sentences. They are generally much larger than jails and more regimented) Then there are over five million on probation and parole; people checking in with the court system. Sometimes those arrangements can be pretty innocuous, but sometimes people have to check in everyday. They're still under a very intense judicial regulation even though they're still not in prison.

**Ryan:** And like you wrote, parole is simply tacked on. It doesn't take the

place of a jail term. It's now added to a sentence. One thing I found atrocious is the privatization of prisons. I had heard about them, but I didn't realize that they had grown so exponentially.

**Christian:** It hasn't grown as much as people thought it would because, in part, it's very hard to make a profit off of prisons. They're so expensive. Private prisons have tried to cherry pick. They go after non-violent populations, like immigrants. In that regard, we think of private prisons as precursors to the whole privatization of warfare.

I think it's important in both cases to not see privatization of parts of the state project of oppression as the driving cause of the projects of oppression. Capitalism and white supremacy need criminal justice to reproduce themselves. If parts of that criminal justice system can be done by private corporations making money from the public trust, great. If you're part of the investor class, that's great. If it can't be done profitably, well that system still has to be done as a public service. So too with the war in Iraq. I see most of those private interests in criminal justice and in warfare as parasitic but not driving the policy—not being the cause of the policy. The cause of the policy is much greater. It's about inequality in a much greater sense.

**Ryan:** I definitely agree with you and can see where that would be a misguided approach. Why that hit me so hard was the notion that we live in a society that could even think about, let alone implement, making profit off of something that by definition should be unprofitable. There is no profit to be gained from an institution designed for rehabilitation.

**Christian:** Oh, I know. I remember distinctly when I first read about this. I was in high school reading the *New York Times*, which I didn't do that much as a high school student. There was this story about the privatization of prisons in France. We were blown away that a system based on violence and cruelty could be mixed with profiteering. It obviously was an invitation for incredible abuses, the most obvious one being if you're getting paid to keep prisoners behind bars, what incentive would the firm have to let them go if they behaved well, rehabilitated themselves, whatever?

**Ryan:** And you talk about libraries being shut down—whether that occurs in private or public prisons—in order to cut corners. Prisoners need reading material. Obviously, some prisoners have been wrongly accused. A prisoner educating him/herself—that may be their key out. There's a famous quote by Dostoevsky. The gist is, "You can judge a society by entering its prisons." There are a lot of hard-hitting facts in your book, but that notion hit me hard: the principal of profiting off of prisons. It's not people like you or me, Christian, but the government and investors.

**Christian:** Our society.

**Ryan:** Yeah. How our society can even let that slip by: "Maybe this could be lucrative. Let's take this low-producing farmland out in the middle of nowhere and build a private prison on it."

**Christian:** It involves strange coalitions. When you really dig into the history of how prisons are cited and developed—both public and private—you see that there are broad coalitions of layered economic interests that drive these things. It's not simply from the top, down. The federal government is always trying to mobilize state governments. The local governments are lobbying to get prisons into their area to create jobs; the ecology of legislation around these things.

**Ryan:** In *The Soft Cage* you talk about tracking and surveillance. I didn't know there was such huge opposition to any kind of tracking system in the United States, starting with the Social Security Card. Can you talk about that, because I don't think people look at their Social Security Card as a perk from the New Deal, but more as an oppressive number you have to memorize.

**Christian:** The story with that is from the end of World War I there was a push to create a national identification number. By the end of World War I, modern identification as we know it had developed: an ID with a photograph and fingerprints. Before that, there was a system called Bertillonage, which were oblong body measurements. But then that gives way to fingerprinting and photographs. Certain groups wanted to create a national ID. J. Edgar Hoover was a key player in pushing for this even before

the creation of the FBI. And there were forces supporting this right wing political movement: certain business interests, opposing labor unions, police chiefs. These people were continually defeated in their efforts to create a national ID number because Americans opposed the idea of allowing the federal government to track them. These forces could never get it through congress. There wasn't enough support.

One of the main concerns about the creation of Social Security would be: "What would the uses of this number be?" And there was a real fight over the limits put on the Social Security number. That's why, legally, you don't have to use your Social Security Number for anything other than paying Social Security taxes. Industry and a coalition that supported a national ID tried through the '30s, '40s, '50s and into the early '60s to create a national ID number and were continually defeated. They could not do it.

Then in the early '60s, the banking and insurance industries held a conference where they admitted defeat in the legislative arena and they decided to legislate de facto on their own. And they said, "Okay, what has to happen is that the major banks have to insist that customers use their Social Security number as it were a national ID number. And that creates the culture—the bureaucratic, organizational culture—that we now have what surrounds the Social Security number. It serves as a de facto ID number. All of your various records are linked to it and through it, but you don't actually have to give your Social Security number to Master Card or Visa. And let's face it: you don't have to have a credit card to begin with. You don't have to participate in the economy. You're free to live under the bridge."

**Ryan:** Exactly. You pull that quote (from the coalition vying for use of the Social Security card as a de facto ID number) where the group essentially says, "They don't have to use their Social Security number, but they'd better wise up...."

**Christian:** Yeah. That story is kind of heartening and depressing, to some extent because we have an example of people—through the democratic process—defeating elites who sought to impose a national ID number for decades and decades. Then we see the power of de facto legislation by the

private sector ultimately winning the day. **Ryan:** As I was reading *The Soft Cage*, certain parts reminded me of the French philosopher Jacques Ellul, particularly his works *The Technological Society* and *Propaganda*. Ellul more or less stated that technology is a lot like Pandora's Box. Once you start, you can't stop. Society doesn't control technology, technology controls society. If I understand his ideas correctly, he stated that we are going down a fatalistic road where the advance of technology is the objective and things like questioning the status quo and the humanities inevitably fall by the wayside. I think what he was really asking was "Are we really progressing?"

**Christian:** I wouldn't want to be so fatalistic about it. There is the question of how social relations become embedded within technology. Social relations produce technology, but then those social relations are also embedded in the technology. So what kind of social relations produce firearms? A set of social relations that are fundamentally about violence and dominating people as a key component of politics. Those are the social relationships that then produce firearms. And those social relations are then embedded in the technology. And what do you use a firearm for? You can't really hammer nails with it or grow food with it. You can only kill with it.

Then there is also a third movement which states that social relations are not completely victim to the political dynamics embedded in the technologies that they create. They can then try to control technology with regulation. I think, sometimes, people on the far left ignore this idea because it's not radical enough. But there has to be an answer to the whole surveillance problem. My suggested solution in the book is that there has to be legislation. There has to be legal limits put on the uses of these technologies. These technologies are not invasive weeds that spread on their own accord. Sometimes people take too cynical of a view of regulation. They think, "Oh well. The rich and the powerful are so corrupt that they simply ignore the laws." Well, it's true, they frequently ignore the laws. But even when laws are ignored and frequently violated, it doesn't mean that the laws have no power. And that they don't help set the outer limits of behavior. I would not take a fatalistic view of technology.

**Ryan:** And I can see that—not having such a pessimistic view. Reading some of Naomi Klein's (author, *No Logo*) work, she talks about corporations coming in and the fact that there will always be people on the far left saying, "I think you've overstepped your bounds there." And that's sort of a positive message I try to carry with me.

**Christian:** Hopefully, it's not just people on the far left saying, "No, I think you've overstepped your bounds." Preferably, what we want is very mainstream resistance. Regular people saying, "No, this war is immoral. This war is a waste. And a horror. We're not going to pay for it. We're not going to send our children off to die in it anymore." We can't leave the important work—it has to be a democratic process—and we can't leave that in the hands of small groups of ideology-committed people. That has to be part of what everybody does in a democratic society. And by democracy, I don't mean by just voting. I mean by participating...

**Ryan:** Getting out on the street.

**Christian:** Yeah, and on an everyday level.

**Ryan:** Which I ultimately think is much more influential than any kind of voting system.

**Christian:** Voting is important to do. People shouldn't fetishize voting either way. Voting is not the end all be all. And people can sometimes get so down on voting that they don't want to do it because they think, "Oh, you're taking the blue pill if you vote." That's ridiculous. People should vote, especially on the local level. Real change can be made on that level.

**Ryan:** I think you're right on the local level. I have my own grievances with voting and that stems from the Vietnam War, which my dad was involved in. But getting back to protesting, we learned from Nixon's memoirs that—although he said in public that the protestors didn't influence him—that was not true. They had a major impact on him in regards to the Vietnam War.

**Christian:** Right. He lied. He said he was watching The Super Bowl during one of the major marches and he was really calling for continual crowd estimates, asking the police to keep him abreast of what the estimates were.

**Ryan:** Moving on to your most recent book, *The Freedom*, I think it's excellent.

"If you're getting paid to keep prisoners behind bars, what incentive would the firm have to let them go if they behaved well, rehabilitated themselves?"

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**Christian:** Great. Thank you. It's a fast, easy read.

**Ryan:** I read it in two days. You dedicate the book to the people of Iraq, which I think is a great thing. As I said earlier, my dad served in Vietnam on the heels of the Tet Offensive. Something he has stated was that the people of Vietnam—especially the villagers—paid the majority of the price. Their dikes were bombed. My dad was exposed to Agent Orange multiple times, but Vietnamese villagers never escaped it. It was on the ground they walked on.

**Christian:** They have some of the highest rates of exotic cancers—certain types of liver cancer—that are found nowhere else.

**Ryan:** And no reparations were paid to the Vietnamese. We often don't hear about the major casualties of war: the civilian inhabitants. War photographer Tim Page is quoted on the back of your book: "Every war produces a couple of iconic books: *Dispatches* did Vietnam; *The Freedom* does Iraq." I agree with him. But you have to keep in mind that *Dispatches* came out in '77, two years after the war ended, four years after the U.S. left Vietnam. I really appreciate the fact that you got this out while the war was still going, where it will have the most effect.

**Christian:** Yeah, I rushed to get it out. That was very important to me.

**Ryan:** In your opinion, what can the Iraqi people expect from their new government? Do you feel it will follow a traditional U.S. client state paradigm?

**Christian:** It's very important to remember that the government of Iraq is not a puppet government. The Shiites had forced an election. The U.S. did not go in there saying, "Hey, let's have an election!" The U.S. went in there saying, "Hey, we want to have an election, but we can't do it yet because of this, or because of that..."

**Ryan:** Similar to the fabled Vietnam elections.

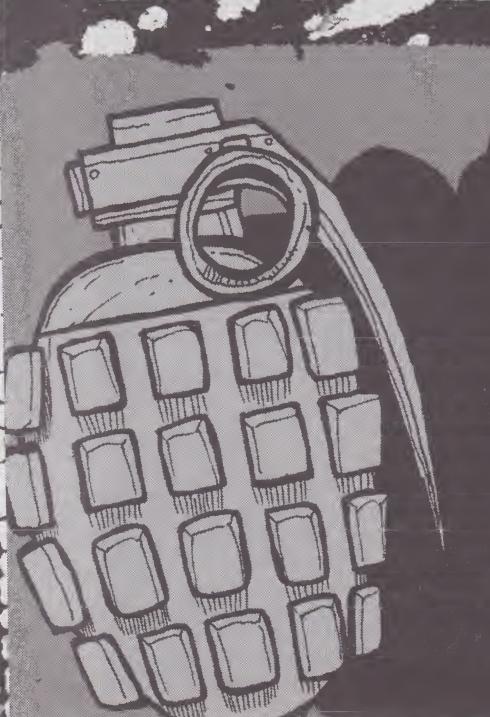
**Christian:** Yes. And it was the Shiite majority's chance. They are sixty percent of the population and were not treated well

under Saddam. Through their three main parties—which are all bitter rivals of one another—they united on this issue of forcing an election. There were massive non-violent mobilizations in January 2005. As a result of that, the Bush Administration agreed to give Iraqis an election. There was fraud, but more or less the elections were democratic. And what they produced was a Shiite-dominated government. And that's how I see the Iraqi government now.

Iraq is becoming a failed state. There's a massive civil war. The government really doesn't have much control. Militias are the order of the day. And I don't see anything other than a long process of that war burning out. I think when the U.S. leaves, which it will, there will be a lot of bloodshed; but there already is a lot of bloodshed. Ultimately, the various religious communities have to come together and create some sort of modus vivendi. And, unfortunately, there's going to be more to this civil war before there is any sort of reconciliation.

**Ryan:** Talking about Afghanistan, would you say the complete failure of that country is the reason we don't hear much about it?

**Christian:** I would say the reason we hear little about Afghanistan is because the Bush Administration has used Afghanistan as a stepping stone to Iraq. Basically, the Rosetta Stone for understanding the rule of Afghanistan is simply Iraq. The Bush Administration was presented with a very real situation calling for some sort of response with the attacks of 9-11. Which were done by Al-Qaeda, which really does exist. Some people on the left want to deny the existence of Al-Qaeda; some even want to deny the events of the 9-11 attacks. That's ridiculous. Al-Qaeda does exist. It's not some global organization. It's a network of Arab veterans, primarily, and Uzbeks and Chechens; operating, these days, on the western frontiers of Pakistan along the Afghan borders, on the sort of Northeast of Afghanistan. But at the time of



**"Iraq is becoming a failed state. There's a massive civil war. The government really doesn't have much control. Militias are the order of the day. And I don't see anything other than a long process of that war burning out."**

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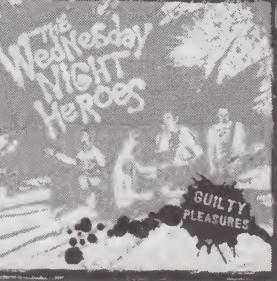
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9-11, Al-Qaeda was, in fact, very close with the Taliban. (The Taliban is a fundamentalist Sunni Muslim group that ruled much of Afghanistan from the mid-'90s to 2001). They had insinuated themselves into the Taliban cabinet, such as it was. The Taliban had very stripped-down institutions of state. They didn't have a real developed executive or legislative branch, that sort of stuff. Al-Qaeda was harbored by the Taliban regime. And they did attack the U.S. and killed 3,000 people. So there was some justification for some sort of response. Bush then uses that ability to respond to go after Iraq.

He wants to go after Iraq because it has all this oil and because it's in the region that has about one third of the region's oil. Most importantly, it's the region the European Union—which is now an economy of 400 million people—and the major economies of Asia depend on for oil. Those other two poles of the world economy depend on Middle Eastern oil. China and India are growing incredibly fast; at almost ten percent per year. They need enormous amounts of energy, so they are increasingly dependent on imported oil from the Middle East. To control those other poles of the world economy, it behooves the U.S. political class to try and project power into the Middle East. Not so as to necessarily privatize the oil in the region—not to own and consume it—but to be the police officer that guarantees the security of the fuel supplies

for the rest of the world so that the rest of the world is beholden to the U.S. and will not challenge U.S. power.

This is the overriding obsession that they had talked about on the record in their first cabinet meeting before 9-11. As soon as they take power in January of 2001, they are discussing regime change in Iraq. This is something they have wanted from the beginning. The leading lights of the Bush Administration had been writing openly about the need for regime change in Iraq and why it was necessary in basically the same terms I've described. They were doing that under Clinton. They were criticizing him for not being more proactive. So then 9-11 happens and the Bush Administration uses Afghanistan as a stepping stone. The U.S. goes in quick with too few troops. After the invasion, I think it's in January or February of 2002, the Republicans in Congress actually forgot to appropriate any money for development in Afghanistan. They then caught that and appropriated 300 million.

Ryan: Unbelievable.

Christian: That fact alone tells you all you need to know about what the Bush administration thinks of Afghanistan. It's a prop used to confuse people. There was no Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Afghanistan is an utterly corrupt, hopeless mess. I think that's why you don't hear more about it:

it's a stepping stone. Its role for the Bush administration was to get to Iraq and the media followed.

Ryan: What do you see in the future for Afghanistan?

Christian: I think Afghanistan will be kept on life support with international aide money for the next five years. I think that over the next three years there will be a withdrawal from Iraq and that crisis will spread; and that there will be increased discussion about Afghanistan. But for the next five years the status quo will remain in Afghanistan. The Taliban will control the southern half of the country, and the Afghan government will be an ineffective, totally corrupt institution which can't do anything. International money will be pumped into the country. Most of it will be stolen and will not help the people. In a nutshell, the future of Afghanistan is ongoing guerilla warfare for probably decades.

Ryan: What are you working on now?

Christian: I'm working on this book on Afghanistan. I don't really have a title for it yet. It should be out in 2009. If people are interested in my articles, I have a website up which has a listing of all my recent works.

[christianparenti.com](http://christianparenti.com)



# FUTUREVI

They're so simple and it makes no real sense why they still exist. Vinyl records are the lifeblood of DIY punk because it's almost impossible to make money off of them. Records aren't convenient. They're fragile. You've got to sit and listen to antiquated plastic spinning on a platter, get up and flip 'em over. Yet, they're quietly durable if you take care of 'em. In fact, vinyl records have lasted longer than every format that's come along to replace them. And—although there are debates back and forth about what's king—they sound fuckin' great decades later.

The reasons I've cited for vinyl circle right back into The Future Virgins: what doesn't make sense on the surface, really makes perfect sense when it's banging back and forth in a groove. Treated right, DIY punk continues to outlast every outcropping of punk which got its wrists broken from swinging from that brass ring—from riot grrrl to grunge to emo to ska-punk. Why? Even if DIY punk sells really well, the best it can hope for is breaking even to get the next record out. Okay, that and an ice cream sandwich, a pizza, and a twelve pack if you're lucky, but little more.

The Future Virgins have two 7's out. Ten songs. That's it. Both are well worth your time tracking down. I try my best to not play the same sides over and over again (the grooves get heated up and your records will wear out faster), but it's hard not to do. It's another simple test of music, wanting to steal it right from the air as it's playing and believe you're living inside of it. It's a corny and romantic way of listening to music, to believe that it transforms, that it takes you somewhere else that you want to be. That feeling's supposed to end somewhere around twenty-three, when real life bruises your idealism with unpaid bills and uninsured injuries. Music's just entertainment, right?

Hell yeah, I'm rooting for the unglossed underdogs. I understand when band members have to work full-time shit jobs to support their music habit. I fully get the concept of barely scraping by but looking for the next thing to create. I understand that in America, if you're poor and alive, you're obscure. I understand records which sound like melodic explosions recorded in a house on the edge of collapse. You can only really count on your friends and family; the rest is roulette.

If you've dug the anxious, melody-laced heartbeats of Sexy, The Horrible Odds, ADD/C, and The Jack Palance Band—bands that these guys were or are involved with—The Future Virgins are an easy recommendation. For those of you who haven't, you're just as lucky. There's an entire world of easily accessible, all-too-easily-overlooked music out there, just ripe for you to pluck, and I can't suggest highly enough that you buy the vinyl whenever you can.

It'll last longer, both the music and the format.

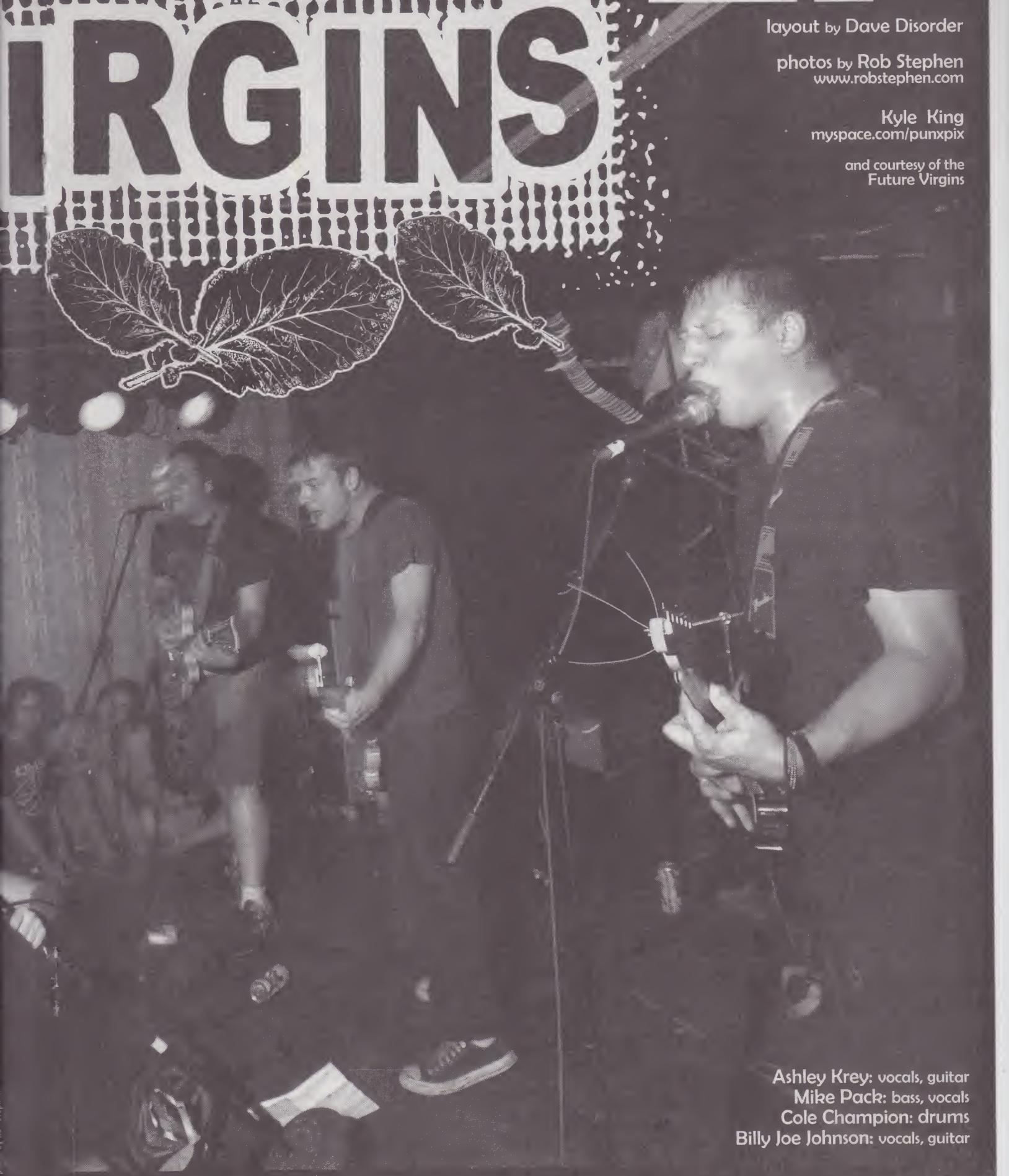
This interview was a group effort. Todd Taylor wrote the intro and prepped the questions. Buddah conducted the interview at JJ's Bohemia, a mom and pop bar downstairs from Revolution Sound, Mike Pack's recording studio in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Russ Van Cleave and Scott Laval of The Tim Version shared their stories.

layout by Dave Disorder

photos by Rob Stephen  
[www.robstephen.com](http://www.robstephen.com)

Kyle King  
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and courtesy of the  
Future Virgins



Ashley Krey: vocals, guitar  
Mike Pack: bass, vocals  
Cole Champion: drums  
Billy Joe Johnson: vocals, guitar

**Buddah:** Ashley, how often do you make the trip up to Chattanooga?

**Ashley:** Usually once a month. This September, I'll do the drive twice because we had some trouble and couldn't get together last month. It's a six-hour, four hundred mile drive.

**Mike:** Nine times.

**Buddah:** How do you know someone is Chattanooga and not just some weird poser?... well yeah.

**Billy Joe:** They work at the Pickle Barrel. The Pickle Barrel is the CBGBs of the south, but they don't do shows.

**Cole:** It's a bar slash sandwich shop that has employed almost every punk in Chattanooga. It'd be safe to say that every band in Chattanooga has had a member that's worked at the Barrel. Mike and Billy are currently employed there.

**Buddah:** With all that band activity why, Future Virgins? What scratch does it itch?

**Ashley:** Good people.

**Mike:** This is the first band I've been in [laughter], so I feel like maybe I can keep up the enthusiasm. Maybe bring half a fuckin' witch to a bunch of old bastards. (Translation: The witch: "to give something the witch" is to give it all you got, "make it coco," if you will.)

**Billy Joe:** It's hard to find other skinheads in Chattanooga who are willing to play working class music with you. [laughs]

**Cole:** It's a different group of special friends.

**Mike:** I'd like to point out the fact that I own this master (tape).

**Buddah:** Ashley and Billy, a lot of people liked Sexy. Why'd it end?

**Billy Joe:** Well, 'cause our drummer flew home in the middle of tour.

**Ashley:** I would say that it's 'cause I left California several years ago.

**Billy Joe:** I don't know. That's some deep-seeded shit.

**Ashley:** That's pre-Billy Sexy stuff we're talking about.



I have a younger brother who was talking to me in Florida  
about feeling like sex was evil. That the good times in life  
were things you should deny yourself.  
I guess if you read the Bible enough, you get that out of it.

**Billy Joe:** I was the laidback guy.

**Ashley:** Trucks are small. Things can be pretty tough on everyone, going on a three-week tour in a Nissan pickup, with two people in front and one in the jump seat. Other bands have gone through worse, though.

**Cole:** The drummer always had to ride in the back of the truck.

**Ashley:** It was a Rosa Parks situation.

**Buddah:** Drummers deserve that... Billy you've been called "handsome Willy."

**Mike:** Only on 23rd Street. They call him handsome.

**Billy:** 23rd is a grimy street by the state line.

**Cole:** That's where all the hookers hang out.

**Buddah:** Cole, on the internet you've been called...

**Billy Joe:** It's kind of funny 'cause Cole's the only dude who gets on the internet.

**Buddah:** Do you take the right order at Lupi's?

**Cole:** Every time... Man, you hater, Bill. "Can I come over to your house, Cole, and set up a Myspace?"

**Buddah:** ... "Cole might give you his last dollar and then do a little dance." Please explain.

**Cole:** Well, man. The internet is a tangled web, if you will. You can't really believe everything you read. Yes, I work at Lupi's. I

take pizza orders and I try and give donations to bands when they're in town.

**Buddah:** It depends?

**Cole:** Well, I listen to the band first and then decide whether or not I wanna give money.

**Billy Joe:** So you play god?

**Buddah:** Cole, according to *The McKenzie Banner* you received a Hope Scholarship for \$1,250. What did you get the scholarship for? Did you buy any drum equipment with the money?

**Cole:** This is the first I've known of any sort of scholarship. If I could've, I would've.

**Buddah:** For all you crazy assholes: do you think about death a lot?

**Cole:** Yes.

**Ashley:** Yes.

**Billy Joe:** Yes, 'cause we're poor.

**Cole:** Sometimes you're forced to think about it when you're confronted with it.

**Ashley:** It's there.

**Cole:** There's less of a safety net when you're poor. More can go wrong.

**Buddah:** Mike, you also record other bands and use a different language. When recording the newest This Bike Is A Pipebomb, you uttered "make it more coco" or "try to be all like STATE LINE!" Please decipher.

**Mike:** Well, basically, "coco" is the intensity. And "state line" is the ultimate fuckin' wild man opportunity. We're fuckin' like seventeen miles from the state line right here.

**Cole:** More like three miles

**Buddah:** Cole, in Shadowbuilder, you're Hellrat. Please further this explanation of the band: "An unholy band of robotic space wizards."

**Cole:** Shadowbuilder was a metal band comprised of pizza cooks and we dressed like wizards and goblins. Our singer Nathan Roe is the sensual wizard who constructs his own costumes consisting of unfurlable bat wings and glowing cyber-eyes and he shoots flames out his arms. It's pretty tight. Nathan's a badass.

**Buddah:** Is Nathan from Chattanooga?

**Cole:** He's from hell and North Georgia.

**Buddah:** Do you ever feel Chattanooga seeping into a song?

**Billy Joe:** Figuratively or literally? Seeping in musically or...

**Cole:** ...or "Oh, my amp's in a puddle!"

**Billy Joe:** "This sounds like it's recorded in Tom's bathroom!"

**Ashley:** Yeah, I think it gets all over them. It's more my friends seeping into a song. Me and Billy will come up with some lyrics or melodies and then we'll get together and totally change it in a crazy way. 'Cause we only get together once a month, we end up in these marathon practices for like eight hours going over every bit of song. I don't know if we'd do that if we lived in the same town.

**Billy Joe:** Man, these questions are difficult for a GED recipient.

**Cole:** People have interesting ideas about what Chattanooga is. How it does.

**Ashley:** Do you think this question reflects more of an overall Chattanooga...?

**Cole:** ...outside perception?

**Buddah:** Like people who say Chattanooga bands can't play in Bloomington?

**Ashley:** Those people think they're afraid of Chattanooga bands, but they should be afraid of Asheville bands. Chattanooga, maybe, has a reputation of being the wildest town in the South, but if you spend some time down here, you might find Asheville folks are the most lovable, most maniac kids down here. Outsiders don't know how bad it can get.

**Cole:** No scene rivalry in the South though, just healthy competition. All those folks are our homies.

**Cole:** In terms of Chattanooga's reputation, some people think we're always blacked out and puking on our laps. Not at all. It's more about sitting on the porch eating collard

## SEXY BATHROOM STORY

*It's a question that's been asked several times for the past couple of years. "What happened to a bathroom in San Diego that got trashed by someone in Ye Ole Buttfuck?" The question was deferred to Buddah, since he was Ye Ole Buttfuck, which Chris Kohler was on tour with at the time. Mitchell Powers, for reference, is the legendary singer of YOB.*

**Buddah:** The incident that is being referred to is where Chris Kohler graffitied on a bathroom wall in someone's house in San Diego. But he shouldn't have done it and it's totally not cool. Me and Mitchell Powers found out what was happening. We went outside and Chris was in the middle of a big circle of dudes who were treating him incredibly... I don't think they were hitting him, but shoving him. We had to go in and pull him out to make sure he didn't get his ass kicked, even though he was saying: "I'm sorry. I'll clean it up." I don't know who it was. It was a terrible incident. I don't think those people knew how bad they were treating Chris. I know Chris is friends with them now, but I think Chris was blacked out and doesn't remember they were acting like they were gonna stomp him. Me and Mitchell pulled him out. And for that they made us leave the house. We left the house and were waiting in the van for the rest of the people who were with us. The one main thug asshole dude came out and like totally tried to intimidate us into leaving with out the rest of our people. "Get the fuck away from my house or I'll call the cops." to which we replied: "Fuck you. We're calling the police and we're gonna fight you, too."

**There's less of a safety net when you're poor.**

**More can go wrong.**



photo by Kyle King

greens. Not that people here don't party down, 'cause they do, but if you just hang out with Chattanooga folks on tour or at shows, that might not accurately represent the whole scene or the people in it.

**Buddah:** Are you guys ready for another question or are you still just sayin' stupid shit? At twenty, what did you wish would last forever but are glad didn't.

**Cole:** Well, it's only been a couple months for Bill here.

**Billy Joe:** You old motherfuckers.

**Cole:** What about thinking it was cool to live with a bunch of smelly dudes?

**Buddah:** Ashley, you co-own a business, Mike owns a studio. Is this something you thought you'd be doing when you were twenty-one?

**Ashley:** Absolutely not. Didn't think I'd be a part of anything. I'm pretty lucky to be.

**Buddah:** Ashley, you have employees.

**Buddah:** I don't know who Kali is. Who is it?  
**Ashley:** She's a Hindu deity; I think in charge of destruction and rebirth. She has blue skin with eight arms and a necklace of severed heads.

**Buddah:** Do you know what it all means?

**Cole:** Is that shit symbolic?

**Ashley:** To me it is. But it's probably symbolic to Hindu people in a different way than a bunch of white people appropriating another culture's religion.

**Billy Joe:** Yeah, than a bunch of assholes in the Southeast.

**Cole:** Ashley doesn't have a head necklace.

**Mike:** Reminds me of this shit I saw with Prince. They're like, "If we went to your vault of your studio, what would be the weirdest shit we'd find there?" And he says: "Morris Day and the Time on acid."

**Buddah:** I'm trying to think of another song to ask you about, but none of your other songs are very good.

**Ashley:** Not memorable, at least

**Cole:** Competent at best.

**Buddah:** Cole Champion, how does it feel to have such a kickass name?

## In terms of Chattanooga's reputation, some people think we're always blacked out and puking on our laps.

Do you ever have to fire anyone?

**Ashley:** Only fired one guy. But he wasn't a punk. There's no scene accountability. No, it was more of a "Is this working out for the both of us?"

**Buddah:** You've all been around longer than the average time span for punks. I'm putting you in the same family as Tiltwheel, The Thumbs, and Radon, and The Tim Version: down dudes who keep on making great music regardless of the daily beat down. "Where's the will to prevail?" In the song "Followed to the Grave," why do you "still get up although I know that I must fail"?

**Billy Joe:** I didn't write that song. I just played a couple hot licks on it.

**Ashley:** Because of bands like this. Always making new friends and writing music with new friends like people I meet in... Pensacola.

**Billy Joe:** Is that song about your family or is it about Chris? Let me know!

**All:** Damn.

**Buddah:** Where'd the philosophy streak in the first 7" come from? You've got nods to *Steppenwolf* (not the band) and Kali the Destroyer.

**Billy Joe:** These people are smarter than the actual band they're interviewing.

**Ashley:** I read the book *Steppenwolf* a long time ago. I compared it to one of my younger brothers. It was a fair comparison. He needed some encouraging. The story is about a guy who has trouble getting to his emotions and letting go. Kind of a normal German problem. I have a younger brother who was talking to me in Florida about feeling like sex was evil. That the good times in life were things you should deny yourself. I guess if you read the Bible enough, you get that out of it. That's how he was starting to think and I was trying to give him some more options. And Kali the Destroyer... I don't know what to say about that... she's a god.

**Cole:** Symbolic language?

Not at all. It's more about sitting  
on the porch eating collard greens.

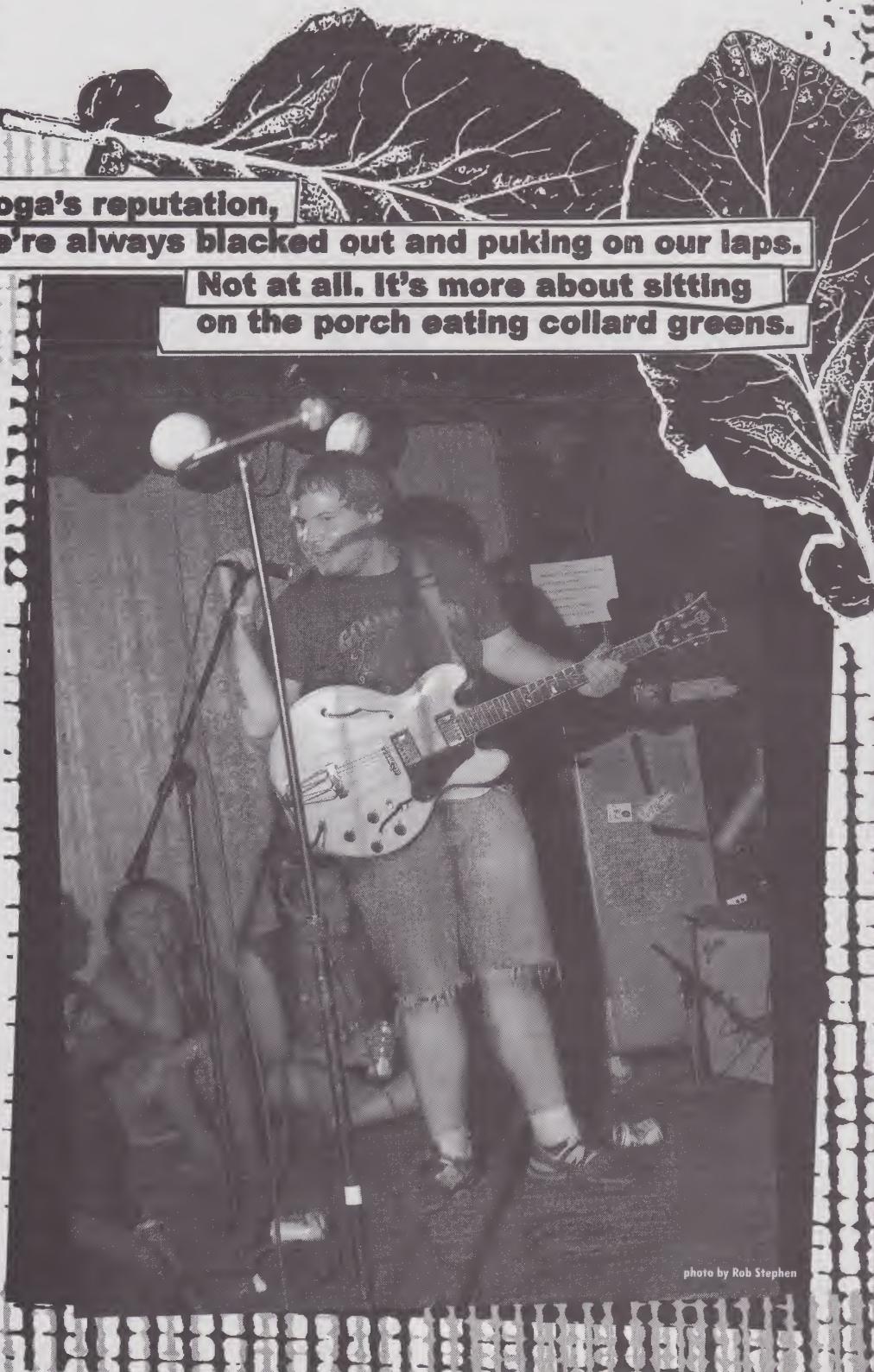


photo by Rob Stephen



## MIKE PACK AND THE SHIT STAIN HIGH FIVE

*As told by Russ Van Cleve of The Tim Version. Mike, Scott, and Shawn, who are mentioned, are also in The Tim Version.*

The story goes that Mike Pack, Tiltwheel (the Davey, Mark, and Chris lineup) and The Tim Version were all in town for something, the first (or possibly second) Fest.

Shawn says he remembered that Mike had stealthily stolen a couple bottles of really shitty liquor from Market St. and had come out to the Tiltwheel van with Shawn to stash them or some such thing. Davey, Chris, and Mark were all hanging out at the van. Anyways, this group of frat boy lookin' kids in a really nice SUV pulls up and they apparently start talking to Mike Pack about how they really wanna get into something sinister. You know "bro-ing down with the punk rock dudes" or some such nonsense.

So, Mike says to 'em, "Oh yea? Well I'm gonna go take a shit on that church over there."

Of course, they don't believe him. So he says, "Okay, gimme some paper towels," and he walks over and shits on the front steps of the church. The frat dudes are freakin' out 'cause Mike is really stickin' it to The Man. So, Mike comes back and they're all impressed, sayin', "Dude that was awesome!" or what have you, so Mike gets all pumped up with 'em and

says, "Yea! High-five!" Then Mike high-fives the dude's hand while still holding his shit-covered paper towels. The guy kinda gets this quizzical look and brings his hand close up to his face and sniffs it, at which point he realizes it's shit and he freaks out. Mike and everyone else get in the van and takes off and the dudes in the SUV take off after them.

Now, the two greatest things about this story are, one, as Shawn points out, the fact that the SUV followed them around thinking that the two or three of them were gonna totally beat up a van full of dudes and two, the fact that Mike Pack had the visionary genius to keep his shitty paper towels, realizing that one of these guys would totally be into high-fiving him even after he took a shit.

Afterwards, they went to Bill Clower's (Radon) house. Shawn and Mark—thinking those guys might show up and try and fuck with the van—stayed out there and drank all the shitty liquor. I think this was the night before Davey's infamous incident with the children's birthday party.

Based on all of my experiences in Chattanooga, I wouldn't be surprised if incidents like that weren't part of everyone's normal recreational activities at that time. They may very well have had bowling leagues dedicated to shit like that.

Aside from that, Shawn and I were also just laughing about how funny it was that, for the longest time, the only way anyone could get in touch with Mike Pack was to call the soup kitchen he worked at. It used to irritate the hell out of Dave Disorder (ADD Records). I probably had at least half a dozen conversations with Dave that centered around how fuckin' hard it was to get in touch with Mike Pack.

**He puts down his beer and tears—literally—two branches off of the tree next to the porch, turns around, kicks his own door in, and roars "STOP THA FUCKIN' MUSAC!"**

**Cole:** Well, it feels good to just be able to embrace your destiny. And not have to create one.

**Buddah:** Ashley, you run both Sluggo's—a vegan restaurant and venue in Pensacola—and Plan-It-X South with Terry. How'd that come to be that a dude who was watching a protest where people were lying down in front of busses in Berkeley in 1999 would move down South, get hitched, and start a label?

**Billy Joe:** Your wife Terry?

**Buddah:** ...would move down south, get hitched, and start a label?  
**Ashley:** Well I think I just needed a change of scenery. I seemed to have always pick the most wretched living situations in Oakland. And I didn't take care of myself very well. I haven't actually tied the knot with Terry Johnson. However, I really don't have anything to do with the label starting up. I help out some, 'cause it's all based in our house. This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb are the bosses.

**Billy Joe:** Can I get a question? Can I take somebody else's?

**Buddah:** Billy, is it hard to listen to old Sexy recordings because you're now in a good relationship?

[Everyone laughs.]

**Buddah:** Okay, Billy Joe Johnson, what do you spend most of your time thinking about?

**Billy Joe:** Green.

**Buddah:** What do you spend most of your time doing?

**Billy Joe:** Working my shitty job, mostly.

**Buddah:** Cole Champion, what do you spend most of your time thinking about?

**Cole:** Beats, man.

**Buddah:** And you spend most of your time doing?

**Cole:** Working.

**Buddah:** Ashley Krey, what do you spend most of your time thinking about?

**Ashley:** Women.



## BANDS OF THE FUTURE VIRGINS

**Ashley Krey:** Sexy, Dory Tourette and the Skirtheads, Black Channukah, Tendercobra

**Mike Pack:** Jack Palance Band, Horrible Odds, Reatard Beaters, Ye Ole Buttfuck, Queerwulf, Hidden Spots, Mister Blister

**Cole Champion:** Mister Blister, ADD/C, Shadowbuilder, Fixins, Suspicious Packages

**Billy Joe Johnson:** Sexy, Giant Bags of Weed, Turd Hungry Christ, Robot Pope, Dude Party, Suspicious Packages

**Buddah:** And you spend most of your time doing?

**Billy Joe:** Men.

**Buddah:** Mike Pack, what do you spend most of your time thinking about?

**Mike:** Keeping it in phase.

**Buddah:** Why is Plan-It-X South a sub label and not its own label.

**Ashley:** Well, I wasn't there for the inception, but I can tell you it's not really a sub label. Plan-It-X South is its own label, independently putting out music from the Southeast. I think when Pipe Bomb started, the name was just a show of friendship with the Plan-It-X music.

**Mike:** I tried for a year to grow a devil lock but couldn't do it. I'm gonna stay behind the kit on this one.

**Buddah:** Who all do you consider your extended family?

**Cole:** These dudes.

**Billy Joe:** These guys I'm in a band with and my Mama.

**Cole:** Isn't she immediate?

**Billy Joe:** I don't know. I don't hang out with her very much.

**Buddah:** In your record collection, what two pieces of music are adjacent to the Misfits?

**Billy Joe:** Fuck, I don't know the alphabet.

**Cole:** I actually looked at this one. Minutemen

and Mississippi John Hurt.

**Buddah:** Ashley, how much time do you spend on the punk side of the restaurant?

**Ashley:** Like booking stuff? Shows are about fifty percent of our time. A lot of people in and out of Sluggo's book good shows. More of my time is spent shopping for groceries and cooking: the exciting stuff. There's definitely the side of shows that's new to me now. The stress. Worrying about cops and fights and people trashing the neighborhood. Things I didn't used to think about. During the summer, we probably have four-plus shows a week.

**Buddah:** Favorite shows at Sluggo's?

**Ashley:** Probably one of the ones before The Fest in Gainesville.

**Cole:** Door Keys, Off With Their Heads, Tiltwheel...

**Ashley:** Those are a lot of fun 'cause they're madness and you can't control it.

**Buddah:** Sir Mix A Lot played Sluggo's. How was that? Please compare and contrast with The Vibrators, who played there too.

**Ashley:** Actually, I asked Terry about this and she wasn't there. She was it New Orleans at the time and I was still in California. But she's got a great story about taking RUN DMC to the mall when they played Sluggo's.

**Mike:** The Vibrators were pretty lame, but The Scorpions were great.

**Buddah:** Ashley, you hooked up with a Chattanooga band but you never lived in Chattanooga?

**Ashley:** I think there's a certain natural comfort here, where you feel really good—not about the town—but the people you meet here. Maybe you go somewhere else and it's a little different. You come here and you can make lasting friends. People are really friendly, especially people I've met who play shows, do shows, and go to shows.

**Buddah:** How'd you get together?

**Billy Joe:** I met Mike at the IBP. Instant Beer Pleasure. It was a bar in Brainerd where they did shows. I was walking around the mall with a leather jacket back then.



**Buddah:** they had a great sign that said: "WARM BEER, COLD FOOD, SORRY SERVICE."

**Cole:** I met Mike probably after a Jack Palance Band show. I met Billy a few years later 'cause he'd come over and eat my food.

**Buddah:** Did you all meet in Chattanooga?

**Ashley:** Mike recorded Sexy twice here. Cole, I met playin' shows in Chattanooga. I met you here, Buddah. At Brontez's house. No, at Danny's house. Which was kind of the wildest show I've ever been to. It was Sexy's first time in Chattanooga. We were with Panty Raid in one van. Embarrassingly enough, we were all hooked on the first Strokes record that tour, and could be seen and heard sitting in the van blasting "Last Night." As soon as we pulled up, we were pelted with oranges from the porch till we shut up. The show was in the living room, which appeared to have some structural issues beneath. It didn't stop fifty people from pogoing so hard that you could watch the drumset and amps tip forward every time they jumped. I heard it eventually fell in. I met Danny that night—who lived in the house with his wife and baby. He was kind of a monster of a man who was the nicest guy ever. All this madness was going on in his house and he was drinking beer on the porch having a great time. The only time he got agitated was after the show. Another band from the Midwest was also

on the show that night. After all four bands had played and the show was over, they decided to do an impromptu jam with various roadies playing drums. This is something I would learn was a bit of a habit for them, to play every Replacement song after the music was supposed to be over. Well, Danny stuck his head inside the door from the porch and politely asked them to stop. And they say, "Sure man, no problem. We'll just do one more song. Everybody, 'Bastards of Young' in G." Danny comes back onto the porch. After they play two more songs with no one watching them, Danny pops back in and asks again, reminding them of neighbors and police. "Last song for sure, bro," they say. Danny comes back out and they start to jam again. He puts down his beer and tears—literally—two branches off of the tree next to the porch, turns around, kicks his own door in, and roars "STOP THA FUCKIN' MUSAC!" They almost fell down outta fright and then tore ass getting there equipment out.

**Buddah:** Did he take you in the back and show you his silencer made from a coke bottle for his rifle?

**Ashley:** No, I didn't get that. I was stuck in the kitchen floor.

## MIKE PACK, QUALITY DUDE

*As told by Scott Laval  
of The Tim Version*

As for the Future Virgins, my only real history is with Mike Pack from the Jack Palance Band. All I can tell you about him is that he's an absolute sweetheart. He's Chattanooga through and through, and is a music fan in every sense of the word. I don't know if you're aware of this, but when Russ and I enter someone's house, or go to a bar for the first time, we generally gravitate straight to the music (whether it be the person's personal collection or a strict grading of the jukebox). Mike was one of the first folks we met on tour who had this extensive collection of records of both new and old acts and really knew his shit. We've always had the utmost of respect for that fella, and now he records many of the bands from 'round there, so he's providing even more of a service to the world. Quality dude.



# The Electric Kisses

Interview by Gunther 8544

Layout by Daryl Gussin

August Heinrich



The Ramones sheltering The Runaways. The Go-Go's with gonads. The Ronettes rearing The Real Kids. The Donnas with a dude. These may read like gross oversimplifications of The Electric Kisses. Then again, simplicity is the Seattle trio's specialty.



## Mike: Guitar | Sarah: Bass | Lori: Drums

**Gunther:** Who are The Electric Kisses?

**Mike:** We don't like most people very much and we love simple and poppy. We think the stripped-down three-piece band is the coolest! We are huge fans of the entire history of rock'n'roll. We're dumb for it. We can't get over it and don't want to. We love the bands other people overlook and we love the bands that are huge and taken for granted. We think that any band that can cross AC/DC with the Ramones will be the best band ever. Something like that.

**Gunther:** What was your earliest rock'n'roll epiphany?

**Sarah:** Realizing that Joan Jett was the coolest person alive. I feel like "I love Rock and Roll" was created to seduce little munchkins like me.

**Mike:** As a very small child, it would be the hundreds of repeated listenings of *Hair of the Dog* by Nazareth in the car. Probably my favorite record to this day. As far as myself finding something, I was blown away by AC/DC at a young age and this has stuck until present day.

**Lori:** Probably discovering my older sister's abandoned stack of 45s and becoming obsessed with "Wake Up Little Susie" by the Everly Brothers. I drove my family nuts listening to it over and over again. My obsession would repeat itself with "I Want You to Want Me" by Cheap Trick. My friends hated me for that one and threatened to throw the record out the window.

**Gunther:** KISS got their name by randomly searching in the dictionary. How did y'all arrive at your handle?

**Sarah:** My roommate had that book, *How to Kiss*. There was a chapter about electric kissing parties, where you shuffle your feet around on the carpet and everyone kisses each other, giving a little static electricity kiss. I didn't play any instruments and never wrote a song, but I thought it would make a cool band name. Later, when Mike and I started writing songs together, I had the opportunity to use it.

**Gunther:** When was the Kisses first band practice?

**Sarah:** Mike and I started playing together in my apartment in September of 2001. First practice with a drummer was with our friend Dave in February of 2002. I guess that would be the actual beginning of the Electric Kisses. Fast forward to three drummers later! We started playing with Lori in August of '06. Fuck, I can't believe it's been almost five years!

**Gunther:** Mike, harkening back to your days in The Zillionaires, you've been long obsessed with the pink'n'black color scheme. Is that a reflection of a warm-but-tough attitude you bring to various projects?

**Mike:** That's a pretty good description. I also like Sweet Thunder, the idea of rockin' and poppy at the same time. Hot pink and black are my favorite colors and always look great. I am also a big fan of the red, white, and black color scheme. Pink'n'black is classic and I never tire of it. Just like a Black Sabbath riff.

**Gunther:** On "Spinnin' Labels," you claim that music "eases your mind" and makes you "feel less alone." Can a record collection really be your best friend in the world?

**Mike:** Actually, that very song is about the fact that it can be your best friend in the world, but if it is then you are in trouble. It was written about a period in my life that wasn't so hot. I am lucky that I had music to lean on, but I also realized that it was not going to be enough. Despite my best efforts, I realized that I needed people as much or more than my favorite songs. It can be unhealthy to need music that much, but it got me through some dark times. There is a fine line between loving it and living for it. I am glad I don't need it so much anymore.

**Gunther:** What's it like playing in a band with your spouse? Do the affairs of The Electric Kisses carry over to the dinner table, or are they left in the garage?

**Sarah:** The only time it can really be a drag is

if we're both spending a lot of money on the band, like for a recording or tour. There's no one at home to buy groceries or pay the rent! Sometimes, if there's something stressful going on with the band it can weigh a little on our free time. But the good outweighs the bad: I love working with Mike and creating something together. Also, there's no one to leave at home when we tour!

**Mike:** I think it is the best! As long as you have a good, solid relationship and good communication and all that touchy feely shit, you got no problem. Our heroes are Fred and Toody Cole from Dead Moon and Kepi and Roach from the Groovie Ghoulies. Seems to work for them and it works for us.

**Gunther:** What were your last three purchases from the cut-out bins?

**Mike:** I haven't run across an actual cut out bin for years but the ninety nine cent bins in Seattle are killer. Recently I have picked up *Macdougal Blues* by Kevin Kinney, *Manos* by Spinanes, and *Red White and Black* by The Bellrays. I am an absolute sucker for 99 cent records and discs. I have absolutely no impulse control and they stack up mighty high around here. I have scored some amazing things over the years and any trip to Amoeba Records will mean a huge stack of records.

**Gunther:** How many people in Seattle are still stuck in 1994?

**Mike:** That depends on the way you wanna look at it. If you are talking Candlebox/grunge type folks, there are quite a few. If you are talking Fastbacks/Flop heavy guitar pop, there are even more. There is a really healthy scene of heavy guitar pop in this town and the shows by Visqueen, Sgt. Major, Llama, Minus 5, Once For Kicks and The Tripwires are really fun. Anything off the Young Fresh Fellows or Fastbacks tree will guarantee a good time and a great tune. Kurt Bloch is the patron saint of Seattle and we couldn't be any happier about it.

**Gunther:** If the Kisses were to headline a nationwide tour, what two other bands would be on the bill?

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Mark Velasquez

## We think that any band that can cross AC/DC with the Ramones will be the best band ever.

**Mike:** As far as headlining, that's a tough question. The bands we would really want I wouldn't feel comfortable headlining over. We would play last on a Young People With Faces/The Neckers/EK's bill, that would rule the school. As far as a bill Jeff Dahl/The Modernettes/Electric Kisses would kill. Or Joan Jett/New York Dolls and us, we might not turn that down. [laughs] Seriously, we would happily tour with: Visqueen, Ape City R&B, Jukebox Zeros, The Suspicions, The Earaches, Paybacks, Thee Minks, Heartaches, The Go or many other great bands around right now. Underground rock music is happening!

**Gunther:** Have the Kisses ever performed as a quartet?

**Mike:** We have played a couple of times with a guy named Ozo on guitar for the last couple of numbers. It was a fun thing to try out for the hell of it. He is a cool guy and into totally different music than we are. We are definitely into being a three piece, however. It is better on every level. Less schedules to coordinate. Plus, it is as stripped-down as you can get without becoming a novelty. It might be fun

to have someone come in on a recording and lay down a lead sometime.

**Sarah:** I love that we're a three-piece. I love the danger of cutting one or two instruments out at a time.

**Gunther:** What's the Kisses' beverage of choice?

**Mike:** The non alcoholic beverage of choice is Dr. Pepper or Tejava iced tea. Tejava is better than any sun tea I have ever tried, it is microbrewed in small batches, and goes down smooth. For alcoholic beverages I like Anchor Steam beer and Ezra Brooks whiskey.

**Sarah:** As far as the band beverage, I think it's probably Pabst Blue Ribbon. I know it's a major hipster beer and all, but here's the deal: it's cheap, it's good! It's usually the band beer backstage at lots of local clubs. It tastes great out of the bottle and even better ice cold! We all like our higher quality hooch, but we always come back to the PBR.

**Gunther:** Have you ever eaten breakfast at the Crocodile Cafe?

**Mike:** Hell yes, and often! It is the best post-10 AM choice in town and the food is amazing. Tons of great vegetarian options,

good prices, and never a long wait. They have biscuits as big as your head and great mushroom gravy.

**Sarah:** We took our Canadian friends there for breakfast and after looking at the menu they asked, "What's a biscuit?" They were answered with the biggest fucking biscuit in town.

**Gunther:** Did y'all find Full Breach Kicks or vice versa?

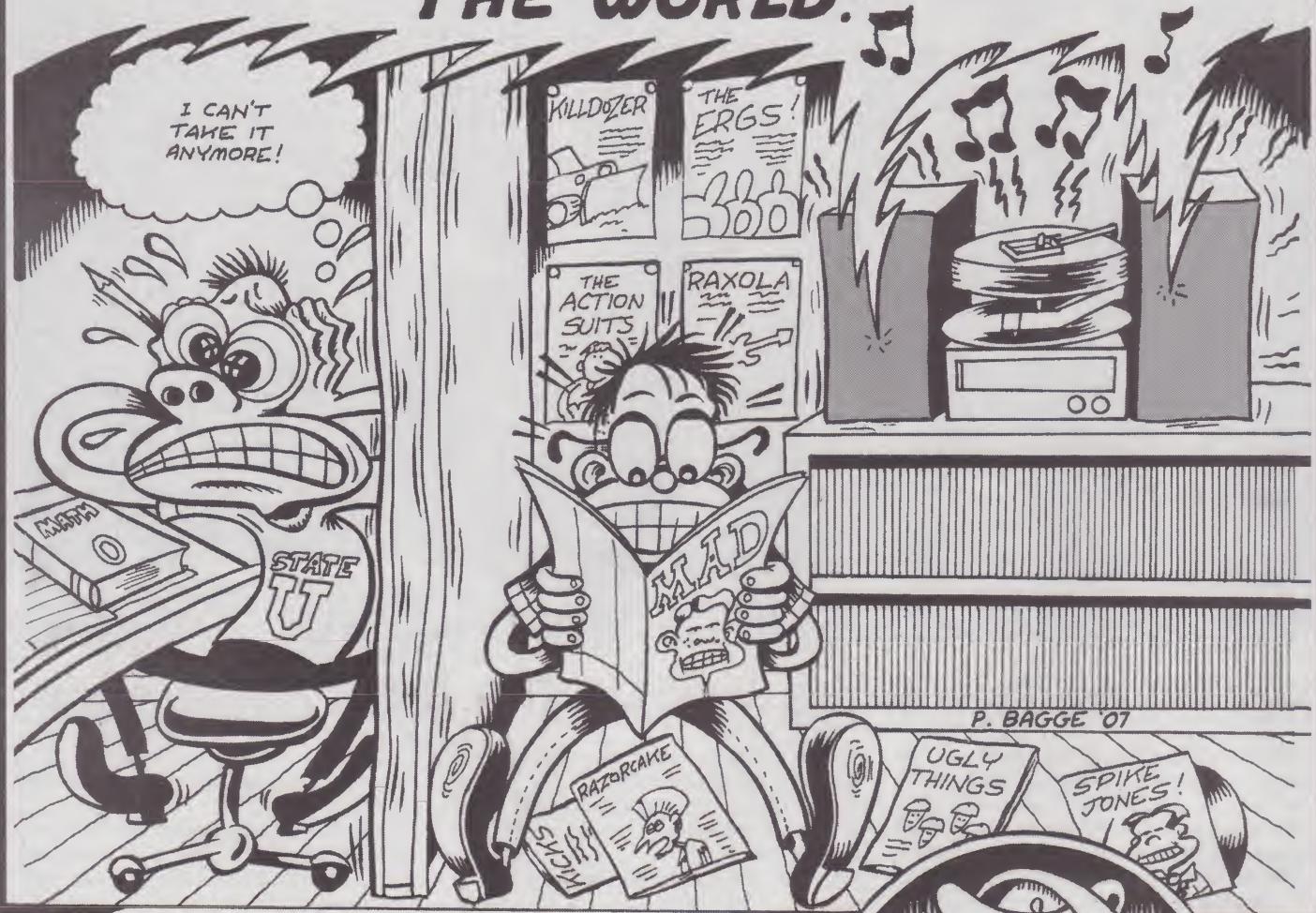
**Mike:** I had been aware of the label for a while. They had released a Dimestore Haloes record and I am a huge fan, so that really caught my attention. Then I found out they were going to do an Urgencies record and that sealed the deal. This was a label that I had to check out. So, I got in touch with Josh, who runs it, and placed an order for all his releases. I was floored and sent him a copy of our recording, not thinking we would be up his alley, but just so he could hear it. He liked it and we were off. We are extremely happy with the job he has done and are proud to be on a label with so many great bands.

**Gunther:** Had Bono won a Nobel Prize, would you've been upset?

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August Heinrich

# I say give Joan Jett a Nobel Prize. She is a uniter who I can get behind.

**Mike:** Yes is the answer. I am sure that he will win one at some point, the lame sonofabitch. I have never been a U2 fan and I think it is weird that he is taken so seriously that he is asked to sit in on world politics meetings and whatnot; a lame band that has influenced legions of lame bands. I say give Joan Jett a Nobel Prize. She is a uniter that I can get behind. Hell, give Steve Earle one. He is ten times the songwriter and actually writes political songs that are amazing and will age well.

**Sarah:** Well, I know Bono does a lot of good charity work and all that. But what a boring bird-man! Why is he always wearing sunglasses? And U2 is the most boring honky yuppie soundtrack around. I don't think I'd really be upset, but I think I'd be bored.

**Gunther:** How has MySpace been as a resource?

**Mike:** From a band perspective, it has been a great way to meet up with other real music fans and other great bands. I have been in touch with some people I have admired for

years. It is a great way to quickly check out new music and gives bands just starting out a forum. That is as bad as it is good, but it's cool that it is possible. There are way too many fucking bands but everybody thinks that different ones shouldn't exist. I still feel a little weird about MySpace and I do not back it as a personal page type thing at all. At this point, I think it is doing more good than harm as far as music is concerned. Where else are you going to be able to just listen to Gunfire Dance, Kickstarter, Beat Angels, or Hollywood Brats at the drop of a hat?

**Gunther:** Who's the strangest person you've seen at a Kisses show?

**Mike:** There are some real characters around Seattle who we love dearly but I am not sure that counts. We have had a few run-ins with dipshit frat fucks and garage punk snobs, but nothing out of the ordinary really. We don't usually see a lot of people, period, at our shows. Seattle is not real big on simple and poppy tunes and people who dress normally.

I saw Juliana Hatfield when we played with her band. She is strange enough, I suppose. Great songwriter, that gal.

**Sarah:** One time when I was wearing my Soviettes T-shirt, there was this guy in the crowd from Fargo. He told me he had seen the Soviettes play many, many times and my T-shirt was making him homesick, which was a relief because I thought he was just staring at my chest! Anyway, he was pretty drunk, and insisted on buying me a beer even though I was drinking the band beer. This guy wasn't the strangest person I've seen at one of our shows, but he always sticks in my memory. He told us he was in Seattle because he was in the army and heading out to Iraq the next week. Crazy fucker! I hope he's still alive.

**More info at:**  
[electrickisses.com](http://electrickisses.com)



# Gang Green

est 1981



**Interview by Sean Koepnick**

**Photos by Nicole Tammaro**

**Graphics by Dave Disorder**

Gang Green are Boston hardcore legends that broke the mold and then poured stale beer all over it. Forming as a three piece in a suburb of Boston called Braintree back in 1981, they shocked the local music scene with their take-no-prisoners hardcore and album art. If you haven't seen the cover of their first record it features three youngsters and their band's name razor-spelled-out on a mirror, underscored by five fat rails and enough coke to kill a horse on the cover photo. (The reality is that no fifteen-year-olds could score that much blow.) Later on, the band ended up winning a radio-sponsored contest, which lead to a recording contract and a feature article in *Spin* magazine. A series of records on Roadrunner Records followed, which sometimes veered off into punk/metal territory, but still maintained the classic Gang Green sound. After a live record, the band left the label and went on a brief hiatus. In the mid 1990s, the band reconvened with singer/guitarist Chris Doherty

(the main songwriter/sole remaining member of the band) picking Rockin' Bob Cenci (ex-Jerry Kids), Walter Gustafson (ex-Outlet), and Matt Sandanto (ex-The Chubs) to lead the charge into the new millennium. They have been playing out as much as possible the last couple of years in both the U.S. and Europe. A new record is being worked on for a late summer release. But, along with bands of that era, like Government Issue, Dag Nasty, and Angry Samoans, Gang Green deserves a special slot in your record collection. You really haven't lived if you haven't heard "Snob," "Alcohol," or "We'll Give It To You." Find out why Gang Green really are the "King of Bands." Walter, Matt and Chris were kind enough to sit down with me over a few cold Budweisers (you were expecting Coors Light?) before their recent return to a DC stage. It marked the first time this outfit had been to my neck of the woods in almost nine years. It was well worth the wait.

# We would rather call our situation a resurrection.

**Sean:** What made you decide to get the band rolling again?

**Walter:** We're in it for the chicks!

**Matt:** Pussy?

**Chris:** We never really stopped rolling.

**Matt:** We always played shows since 1996.

**Walter:** We were just resting. The band never broke up.

**Sean:** Gang Green—is there another meaning than what it sounds like: the disease?

**Chris:** No, the name came from Rockin' Bob Cenci. Jerry's Kids came up with the name.

**Matt:** Didn't Bob want to call Jerry's Kids Gang Green?

**Chris:** That is true.

**Chris:** They came up with Jerry's Kids, so we got Gang Green. It was all Rockin' Bob. He has been playing with us the last five to six years. But he informed us he is "unavailable" during the month of June.

**Matt:** Unavailable for Gang Green.

**Walter:** He does have a pretty busy social calendar. After all, it is cotillion month!

**Sean:** What's been the audience make-up for the latest shows?

**Chris:** You know what? It's been fucking amazing.

**Walter:** Eight to eighty.

**Chris:** A lot of young kids. And a lot of old school fans. Every night we play... it already happened tonight: "I saw you guys at the fucking Wilson Center. I saw you twenty-three years ago." So we get the old school fans who come down and still appreciate what we do. There are also a lot of new fans, which is kind of fucking funny.

**Matt:** We just came back from a tour of Europe. Some of the newer fans end up asking us about *Another Case of Brewtality*. Then we get the older fans asking about *Another Wasted Night*.

**Chris:** Then there are the Roadrunner fans, which are into more of the metal years.

**Sean:** Tell me about the new record coming out this summer.

**Walter:** It's called *Hell of a Morning*.

**Matt:** It's called *Welcome to the Doghouse*.

**Chris:** *The Song Remains the Same*.

**Chris:** It's probably going to be sixteen songs.

**Walter:** Sixteen songs and about fourteen minutes long.

**Chris:** My favorite song is slowly moving its way to the top of the list. We're working hard on it. We've got some great songs.

**Matt:** I mean... we all have day jobs. It's not like we're fucking Rancid and can spend six months in the fucking Caribbean in a studio.

**Chris:** At this point in our lives, I'm forty-one. Walter is... Walter. Matt is the "baby" of the band. We've got some things going well with writing. We've laid down some basic tracks. So things are going good.

**Sean:** Since we're talking about reunions, what band's reunion is the most exciting for you?

**Walter:** We would rather call our situation a resurrection.

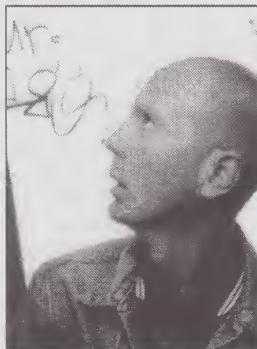
**Chris:** I have a house down in Nashville. I saw the Circle Jerks down there. They were fucking phenomenal. Seeing them come through again...

**Walter:** We were hoping to go to Japan with them but it didn't work out.

**Chris:** They were fucking great. We've



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# Gang Green



probably done two hundred shows with the Circle Jerks and it's the best I've ever seen them.

**Sean:** Does the half-pipe skate ramp still come out onstage?

**Chris:** Every now and then.

**Matt:** We don't have the crew—but it depends on how big the stage is. We can bring the halfpipe if it can fit in the Windstar.

**Sean:** What luck have you had getting a beer sponsor?

**Matt:** None. We never had an old beer sponsor. Any beer companies that are listening: Gang Green is a legendary band. We are legendary for our beer-drinking prowess. We have songs like "Another Wasted Night" where we say "I drink Budweiser." I drink Budweiser religiously. But if it's a problem we can change it to "your beer here." No beer company has actually approached us.

**Walter:** Many lawyers have approached us. Not in the good sense of the word.

**Chris:** If someone actually thinks that it's kind of a gimmick or some type of way to promote ourselves—the band, when we get together, it is nothing but fucking complete debauchery. We're completely fucked up.

**Matt:** A ninety pack at rehearsal is not overdoing it.

**Chris:** When the thirty-six pack came out, we were so excited.

**Matt:** Three of those for rehearsal.

**Sean:** What songs do you never get tired of playing live?

**Chris:** None of them, I love them all.

**Matt:** My favorite song is "Have Fun."

**Chris:** *Another Wasted Night* stuff. Like really going back to the old school. We do some of the more metal stuff from Roadrunner but then we pull songs from bands that we idolize. We've been playing "Bastards of Young" by The Replacements.

**Matt:** We just want to have some fun while we're old enough to get away with it.

**Sean:** What record was the most rewarding for you to knock out in the studio?

**Chris:** They all were. They were all fun.

**Walter:** I like that you still call them records.

**Chris:** I can listen to anything we have recorded and remember where I was and when it was that I wrote that song. All of them were fun.

**Matt:** Like Tom Brady would say when asked what record was the most fun, he would say "the next one."

**Sean:** Biggest crowd the band has played for?

**Chris:** We played a festival in Belgium; it was like fifty to sixty thousand people.

**Sean:** I know you opened for Ozzy Osbourne once. Favorite Ozzy guitarist and why.

**Chris:** No, no, no, and no.

**Walter:** Zakk Wylde.

**Matt:** You need to tell your favorite Ozzy story.

**Chris:** We played at the Kingston Fairgrounds, in New Hampshire. It was an outdoor festival. There were all these port-a-potties backstage. There was one that had a fucking padlock on it. Only Sharon Osbourne could use. But we were sharing a big fucking construction trailer with Queensrÿche. We were rocking the thing back and forth while they were trying to practice. We just bugged the fuck out of them! So Sharon had to have her own pisser.

**Sean:** Did the PMRC (Parent's Music Resource Center, formed by Tipper Gore. They tried their best to censor music in America.) ever end up "sucking it?"

**Walter:** That's the best question in fucking twenty years!

**Chris:** We did have to change the picture of Aimee Mann and I myself, we got a "cease and desist" from 'Til Tuesday's management.

**Walter:** Except nobody noticed it; it was only on the black 12". So there you have it.

**Sean:** Biggest lie you told yourself for years that you started believing, but no longer do?

**Matt:** I have to be at the top of my game before each show. The last thing I want to have happen is have someone say, "I saw Gang Green back in the day and the bass sounded

different than that." You can't phone it in.

**Sean:** What band member spent the least amount of time in the group?

**Chris:** Tough question. Put it this way, the band members that are here with me now have spent the most time in the group. How's that? Turn a negative into a positive.

**Sean:** Was Joe Gittleman fired for liking ska too much?

**Chris:** No, not at all.

**Walter:** Joe started as a roadie. He roadied for The Outlets. Then Chris called me one day. He said, "We're going on tour and we can't find anybody." I wasn't in the band at this point. I said, "I'll give you Joe's number. He is the only other guy that always helps me out." Joe goes up, comes back, and he is the bass player! It was awesome. Joe's a great guy.

**Chris:** It's great, playing these shows and then running into people who bring up some old memories. We were in Germany and this guy comes up to me and says, "How good's your memory?" I go, "What do you need to know?" He said, "Remember, you came over to my house one time and you were playing with my daughter? She was two years old. And you had a daughter the same age." I said, "Yeah, and your wife cooked a great meatloaf!" He said, "I can't believe you fucking remembered that." I mean this was seventeen, eighteen years ago.

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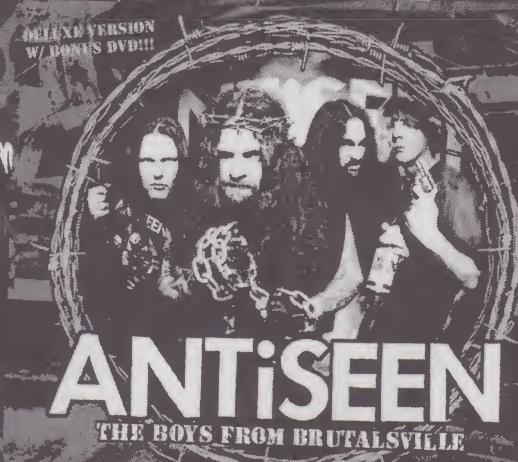
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**Sean:** Have you ever shredded a solo so much that your amp exploded?

**Chris:** No. But I've seen a million faces and I've melted them all.

**Walter:** A monitor caught fire once, I remember. It was an outdoor show in the rain. And the monitor was kicking smoke at me. Actually, that may have been with another band, not Gang Green.

**Sean:** What band did the best cover of "Alcohol"?

**Chris:** Metallica.

**Walter:** It was pretty good.

**Chris:** If you had to boil it down to who did the best cover, how could it not be Metallica? I mean, really, if you think about it.

**Walter:** Well, the drumming was a little off.

**Sean:** I'm going to go through your past hits and have you make a brief comment on each. Did the cocaine on the cover of *Preschool* ever come back to bite you on the ass?

**Walter:** It was salt.

**Chris:** Yes, once my fucking daughter was old enough to see it.

**Sean:** *Another Wasted Night?*

**Chris:** Fucking greatest record I ever made man.

**Walter:** White Dog Studios, remember? I am allergic to dogs. The owner had this big white dog. I would play a couple songs and then start wheezing.

**Chris:** I just remember being set up in this isolation booth so I could just start wailing on the guitar.

**Sean:** *You Got It?*

**Chris:** Don't remember much of that.

**Sean:** *Older...Budweiser?*

**Chris:** We recorded that in this place in Rhode Island. We stayed at the studio, lived there. We were locked down for like two weeks. The big thing about that one was that we actually recorded that album sober. We didn't allow drinking while we were in the studio. I think that was probably the greatest record we ever made. We really fucking did that right.

**Sean:** *Another Case of Brewtality?*

**Walter:** We did that one.

**Chris:** It was just me and him.

**Walter:** We had some guest stars come in. We had some help from Dave Minehan from The Neighborhoods.

**Chris:** That was one of the records that was the most fun to make. Walter and I did all the pre-production at my kitchen table; work on the songs and the arrangements. We'd get the drum tracks down. I would take a break for a cigarette since you couldn't smoke in there. Then I would play the bass and then we would do the guitars. That was fun. Dave did this great solo on "Death of the Party." On *Backed and Gacked*, it was pretty much the same thing.

**Walter:** Yeah, *Backed and Gacked* was part of an ongoing thing for us.

**Sean:** What band were the biggest jerks to share a bill with?

**Walter:** I don't like to speak badly of anybody.

**Chris:** Keel.

**Walter:** Stiff Little Finger's manager, not the band. They are great. He is not their manager anymore. That guy was the biggest dick.

**Sean:** Now looking back, what L.A. bands really did hold their end against Boston hardcore?

**Chris:** The Jerks! Absolutely man, greatest band ever!

**Walter:** There's a couple "new" bands. I'm a big fan of NOFX. I'm still a big fan of Middle Aged Brigade. Well, they are Youth Brigade, but they are getting older. And you can't go wrong with anything Social Distortion ever does.



A

# TOP FIVES

## RAZORCAKE STAFF

Adam Yoe

(A reader who sent us a Top 5)

- Sick Sick Birds, *Chemical People EP*
- American Steel getting back together (I don't care. *Jagged Thoughts* is a great album!)
- Ringers, *Detention Halls*
- Finding the Thumbs' *All Lesser Devils* at the thrift store for a dollar. I was so excited I forgot to look for a sofa.
- Reigning Sound, *Too Much Guitar*. Finally checked it out. I've been missing out, apparently.

Adrian Salas

*Five Themes Songs for the (Shitty) First Summer out of College*

- Nomeansno, "The River"
- SNUF, "Drunk on a Bike"
- The Ergs!, "Books about Miles Davis"
- Descendents, "Coolidge"
- Buzzcocks, "I Believe"

Amy Adlozic

*Top 5 Songs I Wish Greg Cartwright Had Written for Me*

- "Your Love Is a Fine Thing" (Reigning Sound, *Too Much Guitar*)
- "Pretty Baby" (Greg Oblivian & The Tip Tops, *Pretty Baby 7"*)
- "Your Happiness" (Compulsive Gamblers, *Crystal Gazing Luck Amazing*)
- "You Can Stay With Me" (Mary Weiss & Reigning Sound, *Dangerous Game*)
- "And Then I Fucked Her" (The Oblivians, *Soul Food*)

Art Ettinger

*Top Five Recent Punk DVDs*

- *Wassup Rockers*
- *Briefs, Greatest Story Ever Told*
- *Ramones, It's Alive: 1974-1996*
- *King of Punk*
- *Casualties, Made in N.Y.C.*

Brad Beshaw

*The Top 5 Funniest Things about Illustrating Sean's Column!*

1. The most challenging (read: insane) deadlines in all magazinedom.
2. Using it to justify the purchase of a new scanner/printer. Yessss!
3. Using it as an ice breaker to introduce myself to Nardwuar the Human Serviette, and a cute girl at my local coffee shop. (He was impressed, her... not as much.)
4. I get to read his columns before anyone. (This means you *Dave!*)
5. Punk points!

Buttertooth

1. Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, DVD
2. Otis Redding, *Greatest Hits*, Double LP
3. Fugazi, *Marginwalker* LP
4. Alleged Gunmen, on my itunes: gotta love free music!
5. *Culture Jam*, Kalle Lasn (book) Founder of Adbusters writes about overthrowing corporate power!

Chris Devlin

*Top 5 Things I've Been Doing Since the Last Time I Submitted a Top 5, Which Was Like a Year Ago.*

1. Dancing frenetically to the Future Virgins *Gravity 7"*.
2. Sleeping with one eye open after reading *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie Wars* by Max Brooks. I now live in constant fear of zombie attack.
3. Laughing my ass off to The Simpsons Season 8 on DVD. "El Viaje Misterioso de Nuestro Homer" is the greatest twenty-three minutes of television ever broadcast.
4. Swinging wildly between joy and despair while reading Bucky Sinister's *All Blacked Out & Nowhere to Go*.
5. Making angry, passionate love to myself during a staff meeting in homage to the first season DVD of 30 Rock. Watch the first couple of episodes and you will know what I'm talking about.

Chris Pepus

*Top 5 Shows of My St. Louis Summer without a Vacation*

- Ultraman playing a set of Minor

Threat songs at the Creepy Crawl

- *Sicko* (film)
- Bitch Slap Barbie, The Clints, The Haddonfields, I Stabbed My Landlord at Cruisin' 66
- *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (3-D film) at the Tivoli Theatre
- *Hedda Gabler* (play), Echo Theatre Company

Constantine Koutsoutis

1. The arrival of autumn, signaling a return to hoodie weather. Fuckin' finally...
2. *People Who Can Eat People Are the Luckiest People in the World* by Andrew Jackson Jihad CD, a pleasant surprise discovery.
3. *We Are* CD by Cloak/Dagger, who are just too insanely awesome for words.
4. *Quo Vadimus* CD by Jena Berlin, who I saw tear shit up live to a crowd of ten people, tops.
5. Finally getting a taste for whiskey, which has made life so much more fun.

Craven Rock

1. Oakland/Bay Area (This place rocks)
2. Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival in Golden Gate Park: John Prine, Del McCoury Band, Doc Watson, Steve Earl, Gillian Welch, Lester Flatt, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Guy Clark (a lineup even hippies can't fuck up)
3. Circle, Wildildlife, and some other band on I can't recall on The Bus (show on a moving ex-city bus. Fuck yeah.)
4. *The Whistling Song* by Stephan Beachy (book) (could easily be the best novel I've read in ten years)
5. Noise show in an abandoned train station in Oakland

Cristy C Road

*Top Five Things to Listen to After You Snort Ambien*

1. From Ashes Rise, *Nightmares*
2. The Distillers, *Coral Fang*
3. The Copyrights, *Mutiny Pop*
4. The Melodians, *Rivers of Babylon*
5. Iron Maiden, *The Essential Collection*

Daryl Gussin

- Future Virgins, *Words & Sounds 7"*
- Panic, *Strength in Solitude* LP
- Skillz, "Hip Hop Died?"

- Criminal Damage, *No Solution* LP
- Violent Minds, *Just Kicked In 7"* tie with Mannequin Men 7"

Dave Disorder

*Top Five No Idea Bands Who Didn't Reunite to Play Fest*

1. Panthro UK United 13
2. Clairmel
3. Spoke
4. Sparkmarker
5. Hot Water Music

Denise Orton

- Young Livers, *The New Drop Era* CD
- The Ackleys, Self-titled CD
- Fiya, *Better Days* CD
- Too Many Daves, Self-titled 7"
- Smashing Pumpkins, *Zeitgeist* CD

Designated Date

- Ramones, *It's Alive 1974-1996* double disc DVD set. Holy. Shit.
- Fuzzy Wuz, *She Frick It! 7"* Think the Dead Boys with a cat instead of Stiv.
- Abby, the 1974 blaxploitation knock-off of the 1973 horror classic *The Exorcist*.
- El Atacor #11 on Figueroa in East Los Angeles. Carne asada porno burrito, guay.
- Mike Watt playing bass with The Stooges. Genius meets the masters.

Donofthedead

- Knugen Faller, *Lugna Favoriter* LP
- Criminal Damage, *No Solution* LP
- Municipal Waste, *Art of Partying* CD
- Stukas Over Bedrock, *Back to the Stone Age* LP
- Being married for thirteen years!

Jason Donnerparty

1. Black Sabbath, *We Sold Our Soul for Rock and Roll*
2. Motörhead, *Ace of Spades*
3. The Fallouts, *Sleep*
4. Davila 666/Wayward Girls/Aurora Roarers show
5. XTC, *Drums and Wires*

Jessica T

RIP Mike Salomon, Lincoln Park, MI Sept 14, 2007—Age 34

Thank you for:

1. Your life-long friendship with Tom
2. Missy, my American Pit Bull Terrier
3. Tijuana
- FTW & RRM

"A lineup even hippies can't fuck up."

### Jim Ruland

1. Dan Padilla at Tower Bar, SD
2. Ladytron at 4th & B, SD
3. Alizee, "Jen Ai Marre" (YouTube it, you won't regret it)
4. Black Time, *Message from Control Tower 7*
5. *Perfect from Now On: How Indie Rock Saved My Life*, by John Sellers (book)

### Joe Evans III

*Top Five Highlights at Carlapalooza, a Two Day Show to Benefit The National Ms Society (Besides Raising a Shit-Ton of Money).*

1. Confirmation that The Modern Machines are playing again, for good.
2. The Hamiltons coming all the way from Canada.
3. The Max Levine Ensemble
4. My bandmate Bill winning both a punching bag and Screeching Weasel records, and combining them on day two.
5. The Steinways (and the candy fight that broke out in the middle).

### Josh Benke

- The Golden Boys, 7"
- The Touch Me Nots, 7"
- *Twistin' Rumble* Vol. 1, Comp LP
- *Twistin' Rumble* Vol. 3, Comp LP
- The Fucking Champs, live

### Keith Rosson

- Punkin Pie,
- *Broke Truck Good Luck Song* CD
- Modern Life Is War,
- *Midnight in America* CD
- The Dauntless Elite, *Graft* CD
- The end of Bummer Summer
- Putting out a new issue of *Avow* after more than a year

### Kiyoshi Nakazawa

1. Quitting my day job.
2. The endless patience of my wife after quitting my job with no other job lined up.
3. Trying to figure out how to take care of my family with no day job.
4. The sinful allure of working at a bar once again.
5. Finishing another issue of *Drunken Master* zine (#10) and sending it to the printers right when quitting my job. Yippee!

### Kurt Morris

1. Black Flag, *In My Head*
2. *Welcome to Flavor Country* #12
3. Stanford Prison Experiment, *The Gato Hunch*
4. Les Savy Fav, *Let's Stay Friends*
5. Everything Pig Destroyer

### Lauren Trout

*Favorite Fictional Characters (And the Authors Who Created Them).*

- Ramona Quimby (Beverly Cleary)
- Arturo Bandini (John Fante)
- Jonas (Lois Lowry)
- Matilda (Roald Dahl)
- Arthur Dent (Douglas Adams)

### The Lord Kveldulfr

*Five Great Things about My Wedding (Other Than Getting Married)*

- A bar in Vicksburg, Michigan letting us leave with full pitchers of beer just so we'd get the hell out.
- Ruckus O'Reiley finally with the two chicks for whom he was built.
- Tuxedoes! Pontoon boat! Beer!
- Three drunken Wisconsinites and three brew pubs within walking distance of each other.
- With gentlemanly grace the Rhythm Chicken held the matron of honor's hand and told her that she was very pretty while he was standing in front of her, a bridesmaid, and the bride's mother, fully naked.

### Maddy Tight Pants

1. The Green Bay Packers!
2. *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone* (book) by Leon Fink
3. Mississippi John Hurt, *Last Sessions* CD
4. *Super Mario Bros 3!*
5. The Parasites, *Retro-Pop Remasters* CD

### Megan Pants

*Top 5 Things I've Learned Thus Far at Art School*

1. The "Theater of My Mind" is a place I need to hang out in at least three hours a week. Good thing tickets are cheap. I pretty much just stare at this one stain on the carpet.
2. I need to go buy a pair of ripped jeans so I can blend in and make people trust me at protests.
3. Good stories don't matter; getting the scoop matters.
4. There's a lot of free food on campus.
5. It's going to be a lonely couple of years.

### Mike Faloon

*Top 5 Presumably Great Unread Books Haunting Me from My Bookshelf*

1. *In the Name of Salome*, Julia Alvarez
2. *A House in the Up Lands*, Erskine Caldwell
3. *Lord of the Barnyard*, Tristan Egolf
4. *Boy Detective Fails*, Joe Meno
5. *Founding Myths: Stories That Hide Our Patriotic Past*, Ray Raphael

### Mike Frame

1. Steve Earle, *Washington Square Serenade* CD
2. Blueline Medic, *The Apology Wars* CD
3. Billy Joe Shaver, *Everybody's Brother* CD
4. Chesterfield Kings, *Psychedelic Sunrise* CD
5. Lucero, *Nobody's Darlings* CD

### Miss Namella

*Top Random Five*

- Plato's Cave Film Screenings at The Cog; Gib Strange from Halloween All Year and Razorcake's own Ryan Leach bring you films so underground they have to show it at The Cog (the most clandestine club in Los Angeles)
- H.M.S. Terror at Echo Park house party. They are sooooo good.
- www.globalwarmingcrusade.com: A classroom outreach program to teach children about the effects of global warming
- Midnight Movies "Souvenirs"
- *Eastern Promises* by David Cronenberg. Oh, Viggo...

### MP Johnson

- Finntroll live
- Skeletonwitch, *Beyond the Permafrost* CD
- *Mutilated Movies* (a collection of short horror flicks, including Urine Trouble, about killer urinal cakes)
- *Age of Reason* by Sartre (book)
- *Eastern Promises* (movie)

### Mr. Z

*Top 5 Songs That Make Me Laugh When They Pop Up on Shuffle*

1. Green Jelly, "Blind Date"
2. Nerf Herder, "Courtney"
3. The Briefs, "40 and Above"
4. Killer Dreamer, "Scalpel"
5. Ben Weasel, "Let Freedom Ring" (Because the singing lessons made no difference.)

### Nardwuar The Human Serviette

1. Music Machine, *The Ultimate Turn On* CD (inspired by the amazing *Ugly Things Magazine* cover story)
2. Riff Randells, *Doublecross* CD
3. Bison, *Earthbound* CD
4. Gravy Train!!!, *All the Sweet Stuff* CD
5. Ape City R&B, *Firestarter* 7"

### Rhythm Chicken

*Top Five Quotes Heard During Lord Kveldulfr's Wedding Weekend*

- We're interstate men of leisure!
- BRIAN! TAKE OFF YOUR NUTS!
- Michigan makes me drunk!
- Matt, I'll give you eighty bucks to shit your tux!
- Your junk sucks! Fuck your junk!

### Ryan Gelatin

- Halloween (the holiday)
- The Broken Family Band
- *Haxan: Witchcraft through the Ages* (Criterion Collection DVD)
- The painting of Steve Urkel next to a giant hamburger in Cincinnati
- Monster Parties: fact or fiction?

### Sean Koepenick

*Top 5 Bands I'm Stoked to See at Riot Fest, Chicago—11/17-11/18/07*

- Naked Raygun
- Stiff Little Fingers
- 7 Seconds
- The Methadones
- Bad Brains

### Sarah Shay

1. The Mountain Goats, *The Sunset Tree* CD
2. Jason Webley, *Counterpoint* CD
3. Motion City Soundtrack, *Even If It Kills Me* CD
4. Bread & Roses, *Deep River Day* CD
5. My mandolin

### Steve Larter

1. Swans, *Swans Are Dead* CD
2. Army Of Flying Robots, *Life Is Cheap* LP
3. Yann Tiersen, *Le Phare* CD
4. Look Back And Laugh, *Street Terrorism* EP
5. Descendents, *Milo Goes to College* LP

### Steve

1. The Arrivals, *Marvels of Industry* CD
2. The Black Keys, *Thickfreakness* CD
3. Brokedowns and Arrivals songs for their split 7". I don't give a shit if I am putting it out and you think that this is a conflict of interest. Ya'll can suck it. I'm allowed to dig shit I put out. I like good things. I can't help that.
4. 7.5% Samuel Jackson beer (someone finally made it) at some bar in Portland.
5. Gabe Rock trying to act respectable in front of his girlfriend at some bar in Portland.

### Todd Taylor

- Future Virgins, any and all
- Reagan SS, *Universal and Triumphant*, LP
- The Underground Railroad To Candyland, *Bird Roughs*, LP
- Tie: Knugen Faller, *Lugna Favoriter*, LP and Busy Signals, self-titled LP
- Tie: Tulsa, *Sour Digs*, LP and Pangea / Harvest Moon Society split 7"

### Ty Stranglehold

1. *Pray for Me: The Jason Jessee Film* DVD
2. The Subhumans (Canada): Live 09.29.07
3. Canadian PBR (5.9% alc./vol.)
4. The China Creeps
5. Anything wrapped in bacon!

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## RECORD REVIEWS



### 999: *Death in Soho*: CD

The sad fact is that, outside of their brilliant first two albums and the one time I saw them live more than twenty years ago, I've never really thought these guys were much to write home about, and this collection of new tunes really doesn't change that opinion. Nick sounds a bit tired through most of this, the rest of the band sounds like they'd be just as interested making waffles or something as they are playing here, and none of the fire that made songs like "Nasty Nasty" is in evidence. Yeah, I know, they're a bit long in the tooth, but that's no excuse for a punk band of any age sounding like they can't be bothered, especially with so much going on in the world to be bothered about. —Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

### A STUDY IN HER:

#### *Another Year in Philadelphia*: CD

This band is mainly just one guy doing electro-pop who works with a revolving cast in the studio and on stage. I really thought I'd hate this and, yeah, some of it is kind of dumb ("The Same Ailment," "Favorite Actor") and frankly, seventeen songs is too long. You're not Anal Cunt or Pig Destroyer, so let it go. No one wants to hear you do your thing for over an hour. However, some of these songs are pretty fun and interesting. There's a mix between songs that are really heavily pop and others that rely a lot on the electronics. On some songs I could hear The Faint and other songs it was like listening to an electrified Ben Folds. Thankfully, my palate is somewhat diversified so I found some good gems on this album, but there's a lot of mediocre swamp to wade through. —Kurt Morris (Sex Cells/Electronic Eel)

### AKIMBO: *Navigating the Bronze*: CD

This is fucking MAN music. Well, by that I mean music that's heavy and hard, like a man should be, not necessarily music to fuck a man to. Although, if you think about it, what could be much more MANly then a load of buff man flesh all getting it on with each other, preferably all while wielding implements of destruction like battle axes and double barrel shot guns... and doing it all in the back of a kickass conversion van with a giant black widow fighting a wizard on top of a volcano airbrushed on the side. That scenario is the music of this CD if it were to be given a visual counterpart. *Navigating the Bronze* has some of the heaviest drumming ever heard outside of a Melvins record,

**They guys are from Canada, but even if they weren't, I bet they all party harder than the guys in Rush.**

—Sean Koepenick

while the guitar and bass compete to see who can be the most punishing of all. And who can argue with a lyric like, "You're going to kill some cats, surf on a shark, and then devour your young. It's solid gold!" Pick this up if you're into heavy stoner rock like Fu Manchu, or bands like the Melvins at their rockin'gest. There's even an entire three-minute drum solo which takes up an entire track. As an added bonus, "Wizard Van Wizard," "Dungeon Bastard," and "Huge Muscles" are all tied for the toughest-sounding song names of the year. —Adrian Salas (Alternative Tentacles)

### AMERICAN CHEESEBURGER: *Modern Advice EP*: 7"

Seething, reject thrash that's more about removing the skin from the listener's face with the lead singer's ear-piercing screeching than guitar solos or fancy musicianship. The most noticeable thing about this record is definitely the lead singer's voice. The music's anger level is probably around medium-high, while the singer's is somewhere this imaginary anger index doesn't even reach. Go figure. Laugh out loud song title: "If Your Face Was Georgia, My Fist Would Be Home by Now." I think I might not actually understand it, but it's still funny. —Daryl (Rock Bottom)

### AMERICAN STEEL:

#### *Destroy Their Future*: CD

*Destroy Their Future* has quickly become one of my favorite recent releases. I heard American Steel for the first time this summer when I saw them play at the Fuck Yeah Fest in Echo Park. I enjoyed them then, but I was surprised by the difference between their live sound and their

studio sound. Live, I thought they really sounded close to the Lawrence Arms. On this, it's more of a... I dunno, electric-folksy, sing-along epicness? I know these guys predate Against Me! by a few years, but I think the first reaction upon listening to this is the urge to compare the two bands. I would say there are definitely grounds for doing this as they both share some similarities. Both bands have singers with an earnest working man's operatic shout, both bands hit full tilt with choruses that beg to be sung along with, and both tend to write songs that resemble mini character sketches or open indictments against some facet of society. I have three favorite songs on this. "Mean Streak" starts out with a drunken-sounding intro about being a really anti-social girl, which turns into a love song from the girl's point of view about one miserable fuck-up finding another miserable fuck-up with the chorus, "I like you 'cause you're like me." I think that might be one of the most astute observations about how "love" tends to often function. "Smile on Me" starts out with a slow and lazy—almost acoustic—intro, breaks into one of the most joyous-sounding choruses when the rest of the band and backup singers bust in, and then, just as quickly, the song ends. I think the centerpiece of the whole album has to be "Old Croy Road." This song about inheriting a father's record collection is the kind of song that sucks you into the narrator's viewpoint, even if you've never been in the exact same situation. This is the sort of song I think people were hoping for more of on the last couple of Against Me! releases. The rest of the record is just as strong. If big, hearty choruses are

lacking in your life, I say pick this up. —Adrian Salas (Fat Wreck)

### ANDREW JACKSON JIHAD / GHOST MICE: *Split*: CD

Andrew Jackson Jihad is doing more of the acoustic protest music with a huge dollop of sarcasm. Ghost Mice's take on the acoustic music is bit mellower, and they have dual male and female vocals. Honestly, at times, Ghost Mice get to be a little too treacly for my taste, especially on the six-minute "Cementville" song, about the magic of being little kids and playing nice with each other. While Andrew Jackson Jihad sounds a little more raucous, Ghost Mice is prettier. The problem is that Ghost Mice also sounds like they would be most at home playing in the back of a stationery and inspirational book shop frequented by middle age ladies. Also, both bands tend to border on sounding overly self righteous. At least the bands have convictions. —Adrian Salas (Plan-It-X)

### ARMEDALITE RIFLES: *Flux Idea for Cover*: LP

Well, on this album, they still manage to recall Boy Elroy just like their seven-inch I reviewed earlier did, though their sound is expanded a bit on songs like "The Revolution...." which is a bit more brooding than average punk band delving in minimalist punk get, and has the intelligence to, at the very least, take its name from a Gil Scott-Heron song. —Jimmy Alvarado (The Armedalite Rifles)

### BAD RELIGION:

#### *New Maps of Hell*: CD

New release from the tightest three-guitar onslaught since Skynyrd. Jay Bentley said that onstage one night, not me! Well produced and guided along by Brooks Wackerman's insane drum cracks throughout, the band comes up with another winner. The usual subject matter is covered, so I'll leave it to you to scour the lyric booklet. "New Dark Ages," "Submission Complete," and "Field of Dreams" reach for my throat out of the speakers. The import version has two acoustic tracks worth seeking out, too. —Sean Koepenick (Epitaph)

### BAGS: *All Bagged Up*: LP

My very own, totally true, Bags-related story: A girlfriend of mine scored a job at a one-hour photo joint in the Fairfax district sometime in 1988 or so. At the time, I had two full-time bands going, and I acted as a sorta substitute member when she was unable to make a gig to sing, or the guitar player was M.I.A. Anyway, one day, Bags guitarist Craig Lee walks into her place of work. Knowing I was a big fan of the Bags, she calls me up to tell me he'd be back in about an hour and did I want her to tell him anything. One of the bands (probably hers) was trying to learn "We Don't Need the English" for the set, but were having problems trying to understand Alice after the second time she said "Fuck them, send them all to..." so I

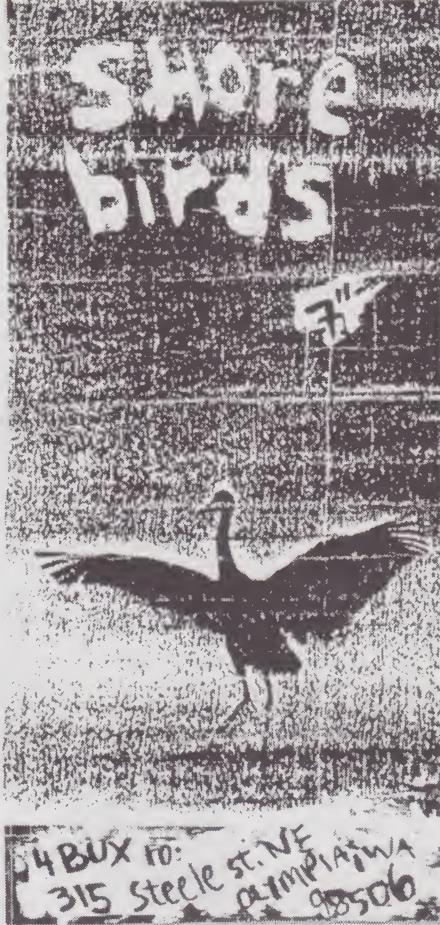
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asked her to ask him for the lyrics. She later shows up at my house after work with the all the lyrics for said song written out by Mr. Lee on a tiny Post-It, *except the one line we were having trouble deciphering*. Listening to this album—which includes “We Don’t need the English,” plus all the other Dangerhouse cuts, the live tracks from Flipside’s *Live from the Masque* CD, and assorted other live and demo cuts, most of which are heretofore unreleased—brought back that memory some nineteen years later and made me laugh all over again, not to mention rock the fuck out to a band that has been a consistent favorite for almost as long as I’ve been a punk. Standing as the more or less definitive statement on this band, the sound quality is downright amazing considering we’re talking non-board live recordings and rehearsal and demo tapes for a lot of the stuff here. Herr Artifex has again succeeded in dusting off a band long relegated to the back ends of the history books and reminded the world of what a truly wondrous thing the Bags were during their short lifespan. Oh, and the mysterious line? “Fuck them, send them all to Canterbury.” Figured it out all by myself a few years ago, so wherever you are, Craig, allow me to offer up a sincere, “ptlhbbt!” —Jimmy Alvarado (Artifex)

**BANNER PILOT: *Pass the Poison*: CD**  
Insanely catchy EP from this Minneapolis four piece. Shades of

Pegboy and Face To Face are here. But their songwriting is all their own so it doesn’t sound like a rehash. “Portland Nights” is my favorite on this platter, but there’s also a groovy Buzzcocks cover too. Go see these guys live if they roll up to your ‘hood. Trust me. —Sean Koepenick (Arsenic)

#### BEAR CLAW:

#### *Slow Speed: Dead Owls*: CD

Yes. Thank you Bear Claw. Fucking kick ass. Two basses and a drummer, who, by the way, does the singing. It’s no godsheadsilo but is instead its own unique beast. Partially Chicago influenced (Shellac, U.S. Maple) and also with a good dose of Unwound, except it is made up of two basses, one of which is tuned enough to sound to these ears like a guitar. Recorded by Steve Albini and mastered by Bob Weston, this is some powerful shit. It’s got a well-performed, dark, indie sound but with a healthy foundation of rock. The vocals don’t always seem to accommodate the music quite as well as a clearer, cleaner-sounding singer might have. However, none of the songs slip too much, i.e. there’s no “slow song,” and the album is capped by the fucking amazing “Rudimentary Understanding,” where singer Scott Picco exclaims through gloomy low end and pop-pop-pop drumming “You’re a liar! A fucking liar! We’re all liars!” and you can just hear the explosion coming out and being echoed by the music. Make every song like this one and you would’ve

produced one of the best albums of the year. As it is, I really enjoyed it. —Kurt Morris (Sickroom)

#### BLEACH03: *The Head That Controls Both Right and Left Sides Eats Meats and Slobbers Even Today*: CD

This CD does the band no justice. I saw this band live a few years ago. We saw three Japanese women set up and just wrote them off as another pop punk band. Right from the first note, they wailed through song after song of pure mayhem. Picture a mix of Melt Banana meets Primus who give birth a bastard threesome. This release has a more progressive and mature sound to it with more control in the songs. I don’t feel the same constant, manic energy from when I saw the band live. But the track “Torch” is an interesting song. The song, though sung in Japanese, has a very sing-a-long feel to it even when the music has more of punk meets a rock metal hybrid. It personally stands out for me as the highlight track. The track “Not Peter” is the track that most identifies, for me, the sound of the band: fast punk with screaming vocals. One thing’s for sure: the band is a tough one to pigeon hole on this release. It can be pretty one second to ugly and noisy in the next and then flop into some funk/jazz groove. A little more challenging to listen to, but if you put in the effort, it will be satisfying in the end. —Donofthedead (High Wave)

#### BLOODY PHEONIX: *War, Hate, and Misery*: CD

Hey, listen. Do you ever think about, you know, aliens? Or more specifically, what aliens (ages from now, exhume the wreckage and rubble of our long-devastated cities) would think if they happened upon a grindcore record like *War, Hate, and Misery*? Like, from a purely sociological standpoint, what does grindcore say about the state of our society, the dissatisfaction of humanity as a whole? Most importantly, would Bloody Pheonix pretty much be enough to instigate a telepathic, planet-wide “Let’s get the living fuck out of here” by said extraterrestrials were they to pop this thing in the mothership’s CD player? At this point I’m thinking yeah, probably. Because this is some crazy shit, indeed. I don’t even particularly like grindcore and I can admire the fact that this band is relentless, scary, and tight as hell. I mean, they’ve got all the requisites of a standard grindcore band—screaming guy, Cookie Monster guy, the fuzzed-out bass laying waste to the low end, all of it—but they’re doing it with such goddamn precision and insistence that I can’t help but tip an imaginary hat. Still, they’re yet another band that uses loaded imagery (dudes being hung, piles of skulls, stricken faces behind barbed wire) and has brutal song titles and then uses what could have been a pretty informative lyric sheet for a foldout poster and

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thanking their homies. But I've come to accept that nine times out of ten, that's all you're gonna get from a record of this ilk. So if you're solely in it for the music, then you'll be stoked. Play it loud and bring an extra pair of pants. —Keith Rosson (To Live A Lie)

#### BOMB THE MUSIC INDUSTRY!: Get Warmer: CD

Best way to try to describe this album?: hyper-kinetic, A.D.D., ska-punk in the best way possible. There are a lot of competent ska bands out there who are okay to listen to, but every so often one sticks out because of how they don't quite sound the same. For instance, I really like Leftover Crack with their weird little black metal riffs thrown into the middle of their ska stuff (I know that's not cool to admit after age eighteen if you're not a junkie, but blah). These guys seem to be cramming as many sounds possible in each song and never slowing down unless it's to make it up in the next measure with going even faster than before. Yeah, there are horns but there's also a ton of weird electronic bleeps and bleeps going on, a lot of gang vocals, and I think I heard a banjo at some point. I also have to say I don't envy the drummer on this, because he sounds like he must be completely overworked with all the stops and starts and tempo shifts going on, which makes sense because all the older Bomb The Music Industry! songs I heard before this seemed to use a drum machine in overdrive. Lyrically,

this is like the audio biography of my life at the moment. Almost every song on this is about being out of college, broke, jobless, bored, and totally without direction in life. The song, "No Rest for the Whiny," hits so close to home for me right now that it almost makes me want to cry. Check this out for sure if you're looking for something different going on in the world of ska... or an unemployed, depressive with a college degree. Also, as an aside, I've got to give props to this band for actually walking the DIY walk and posting almost all their material, even this album, for free on the internet. You have no excuse not to check them out, and maybe buy a T-shirt if they roll through. —Adrian Salas (Asian Man)

#### BOTCH: American Nervoso: CD

*Jesus wept.* Pretty sure I can feel my hair whitening and falling out as I'm listening to this. Originally released in 1999, *American Nervoso* is getting the re-release treatment from Hydra Head, and I'm grateful I didn't hear it the first time around, as it probably would have significantly shortened my lifespan. While it may not be cool to admit, this is the first thing of any duration I've heard by these guys, and it's pretty much a non-stop nail biting session from start to finish. Despite the slim promo packaging (cardboard sleeve with no more info on it than a list of international distributors), the recording's full to the brim with discordance, punishing

rhythms, crazy-ass time signatures, stop-on-a-dime precision and blood-spraying vocals. Including five demo/unreleased tracks, *American Nervoso* comes out of the stereo like three pots of coffee and a defective, blinking, chirping, about-to-explode Speak'n'Spell. Think Combat Wounded Veteran if they excelled at jazz camp, or the album Robocop would put on if he was trying to get laid. It might sound like I'm talking shit here, but I'm not—especially given the time period in which they were active, I can see why these guys were huge; it's inventive, dense, frantic, atmospheric shit that current "heavy" bands are obviously using as a blueprint, yet nine times out of ten fail to even come close to. Honestly, it's a record I don't plan on listening to that often: I'm rarely feeling pissed-off and crazed enough to match what's coming out of the speakers. —Keith Rosson (Hydra Head)

#### BROKEDOWNS, THE: New Brains for Everyone: CD

Two parts Dillinger Four, one part The Arrivals, and one part Toys That Kill. Pretty darn good for a band I've not heard of until right now. Gritty yet not sloppy, a characteristic that's always a great treat coming from the Midwest, wouldn't you say? —Mr. Z (Thick)

#### BRUTAL KNIGHTS: Life Ain't Cool: 7"

Part of Toronto's new wave of elite noise makers comes another record by this band after a couple of LPs

and, I believe (I don't feel like digging through my records to check), two prior 7's. Saw this band once here in L.A. and once up in Toronto and have been quite entertained by both experiences. The band plays a trashy and raw style of punk that is laced with very tongue and cheek lyrics and rocks hard with the best of out there. This release shows the continued growth of the band with memorable and fun songs showcasing their weird sense of humor. Four fun tracks on this record that are gonna be fun hearing them live someday. There is a reason why they are plowing their own path and people are taking notice. —Donofthedead (Riff Raff)

#### BUCKY SINISTER: What Happens in Narnia, Stays in Narnia: CD

Recorded live in San Francisco, *What Happens in Narnia* opens with references to the C.S. Lewis books and role-playing games. The message is clear: everyone's welcome, geeks are preferred. It doesn't matter that I've barely dabbled with the Narnia books and never fell for the charms of twelve-sided die, I quickly came to trust Bucky. That's key for a comedy record. I'm a sensitive progressive type and I need to know that the performer isn't a mean-spirited twerp making jokes for the sake of making jokes (Howard Stern). Once they clear that barrier, they have free reign, and those are my favorites. Bill Hicks. David Cross. Patton Oswalt. Bucky Sinister mines similar territory. His approach

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is simple: let's laugh at the dumb shit I've experienced. The first half of the record feels loose, off the cuff. Most of it works well, especially "Renter's Shame," though the excessive "you know?"s clog the works at times. The second half of the record sounds like Bucky is reading or, if going from memory, working from a well-crafted script. His phrasing is better and the humor pays off more consistently. I think Bucky's a good comedian but a great storyteller. Enough talk of generalizations, let's get to examples. There are brilliant exercises in "What if...?" speculation like "My Date with Wonder Woman" ("Next to all the books are (her) pictures of runways and airport hangars with nothing else in them...Those are my plane. My plane's invisible. I'm the only one who can see it.") and "My Date with Laura Ingalls" (they meet at an estate sale, he's stealing a diary, she's stealing a Betamax machine). I only wish they were longer. "Like a Real Life Adam Sandler" is the perfect closer, a laugh out loud funny and oddly touching tale of Bucky's stalker. He might laugh at people, but he still treats them like people rather than punching bags. *What Happens in Narnia* is a lot of fun. —Mike Faloon (Talent Moat)

#### **BUSY SIGNALS, THE: Self-titled: CD**

Absolutely, positively strange. Of all the material I pulled to review this issue, I listened to Knugen Faller and The Busy Signals back to back, and the similarities are incredible.

Observations: 1.) The bands are probably not aware of one another. 2.) They are both female-fronted punk bands. 3.) The Busy Signals are from Chicago and Knugen Faller are from Sweden and both sing in their respective languages, so Knugen Faller could be telling me to put puppies into a cheese grater and I'd still be bobbing my head in a little dance. 4.) Josie Cotton is probably smiling really fucking broadly right now because two bands have stepped up to the "Johnny Are You Queer?" plate. 5.) The Knugen Faller grabbed me right off the bat, while it took some headphone time for The Busy Signals to take root. (I chalk it up to a Ramones thing, where, on the surface, it's simple, but when you start putting all the tiny bits together, they become addictive. Strange, still, because The Busy Signals' debut 7" shook the change right out of my pocket on the first listen.) Conclusion: The world's way big enough for both bands. Awesome. —Todd (Dirtnap)

#### **CANADIAN RIFLE: Self-titled: 7"EP**

Think if Billy Bragg's consciousness was born into the skin of Johnny Peebucks of the Swingin' Utters: that self-effacing, self-loathing, street-wise, community-friendly, rough poetry backed by fiery, tuneful musicianship. Canadian Rifle is also similar to Off With Their Heads, in the fact that it's catchy as all hell, and you'll be singing along at the top of your lungs... to sickness. I don't know how they've fused the acute awareness of one's own

shortcomings into rollicking anthems, but they have. Good stuff. Yet, if you only have a couple bucks and have to decide: "This 7" or the one on Squirrel Heart?" I'd go with Squirrel Heart. —Todd (Criminal IQ)

#### **CATBURGLARS, THE: You May Be Dumb, but I Don't Care: 7"EP**

I was just in Prague and I noticed that most of the statues there were of people with huge clubs whacking something down by their feet, be it a dragon or another human being. Over time, little's changed. The Catburglars do the same. Club and hack and pound at the listener. Nothing fancy, just brute power, and there's something nice, simple, and primal about that. No frills—even to the point of denaturing a Zero Boys cover—and all operating within their swinging capacity: whack, whack, whack, done. Reminiscent of early Smut Peddlers, without John's distinctive voice. Comes with an extensive booklet. —Todd (Cowabunga)

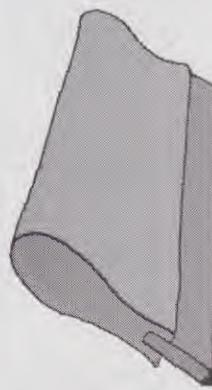
#### **CATHOLIC BOYS: Fixed: 7"**

You gotta admit, releasing four 7"s after you've already broken up is a pretty class way to go out, especially for a punk band. Milwaukee's Catholic Boys are a cathartic mixture of listening to Little Richard and sticking two nine volt batteries to both the right and left side of your tongue: a memory you'll never forget because of how fun it was and the brain corpse. —Daryl (Sweet Rot)

#### **CHINESE HAPPY: Bear Hands: CDEP**

I said NO MORE BANDS with "CHINESE" or "TOKYO" IN THEIR NAMES!!! Kind of reminds me of F.Y.P. before they were any good, although i'm not entirely sure what makes me say that. Also reminds me a little bit of that song by Th' Inbred, where they're pretending to be stoned straightedges, but i don't know what makes me say that either. The weird Riot Bboy earnestness of the early songs is completely upset by "Friday I'm in Love," which, while charming enough, will do little to make anyone forget either "Friday on My Mind" by the Easybeats or "Sunday You Need Love" by Trio. I'm sure that someday a beautiful butterfly will emerge from this chrysalis, spread its silken wings, and flutter gracefully towards the sun. Today, however, is not that day. Tomorrow isn't looking particularly good, either. BEST SONG: "Friday I'm in Love" i guess BEST SONG TITLE: "Thank You But I'd Rather Die behind the Chemical Sheds," which also might be the best song, but that title is too long to type more than once. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Never mind, i was just reading thru the lyrics and found out "Friday I'm in Love" was a Cure cover. Strike the whole review from the record. Well, fuck you. I SAID no more bands with "Chinese" or "Tokyo" in their name. You brought this on yourself. —Rev. Nørb (Waiting For Lunch)

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**CLOAK/DAGGER: We Are: CD**

White hot abdomen-tearing record from this Richmond four piece. If you like Black Flag, B'last, and even a little Scream, this may be the band to singe your eyebrows off. "Walk the Block" and "Set the Alarm" really aimed for the gut. But this one never lets up from start to finish. Gritty, stark, and real. Goes great with black coffee in bed with a hangover. —Sean Koepnick (Jade Tree)

**CLOSET FATTIES: Ghetto Girls: 7"**

The first two tracks on this 7" remind me of the catch-your-breath moments in Scared of Chaka albums. You're fully aware that the band's capable of gorilla-with-chainsaw-and-fireworks time, and you know it's coming, but it's real fuckin' nice, just kicking back and chugging some beers before you're wrestling a rabid, hairy-armed simian of a song through a glass table. And, lookee, the hidden track (on a 7", mind you) is that gorilla. Bam! Bam! Bam! Features "scab members" (their words) of Witches With Dicks. Neat. —Todd (\$4ppd., Spent Planet, Ltd.)

**COG: Course Over Ground: CD**

I was intrigued by this band when I read their one-sheet and saw that these guys are total Steve Albini nuts. Now, seeing as anything that Albini has played on is pure gold to me, I had to give this a listen. Cog gets the sparse sound of Shellac down pat, with trebly guitars, heavy bass, and

syncopated drum lines. The problem with the whole affair is that even though the band has the indie-noise rock sound and style of Shellac, they seem to be missing the personality that shines through on Shellac albums. It's hard to call any of this bad, but it is pretty indistinct in the long run, as it is very competent musically, but without the eccentricities that define the bulk of Shellac's amazing body of work. Did I mention this band is from Croatia? They're from Croatia. —Adrian Salas (Moonlee)

**CONDORS, THE: Wait for It: CD**

"The absence of boundaries is the enemy of art." It's an Orson Welles quote, and while I'm not sure what Orson thought of skinny tie power pop—I have a difficult time picturing the legendarily rotund thespian at a Knack concert circa '79 sipping a glass of Paul Mason, singing "Good Girls Don't"—his theory fits that genre well. Give someone unlimited resources and they will likely return the favor by producing crap. Give them limitations, challenges, something to overcome, and things might click. Power pop's boundaries are clearly marked: harmonies, hooks, and heartache. A lot of The Condors' predecessors couldn't handle the restrictions, falling victim to the "wee bit of killer, whole lotta filler" syndrome, putting out albums that felt like singles that overstayed their welcome; too many songs that didn't function well within the

confines. These days, there is no brass ring for a power pop band to snag, no commercial incentive to rush out a half-baked record, just the challenge of rearranging those power pop building blocks a dozen times over. The Condors, led by Pat DiPuccio, come up aces, especially on "Spare Time" (which had me searching the credits for a mention of Gary Frenay of Flashcubes fame). *Wait for It* is barebones and fashion-free (the roots rock camp could claim The Condors as easily as the power poppers) and it's really, really good. —Mike Faloon (Rank Outsider, www.rankoutsiderrecords.com)

**CONNIPION FITTS:  
Bullfights on Acid: CD**

I wish this were recorded just a tiny bit better. It's very cheaply done, which is super punk, but just a little more lo-fi than it should be. This band is capable of a lot more than this recording allows. Think about the "classics". New York Dolls, David Bowie, Rolling Stones, that kinda stuff. Filter it through the blown-out amps of a bunch of punk kids huffing keyboard duster in southern Illinois, and you get the Connipion Fitts. I can't wait for them to put out a better recording! —Ben Snakepit (Let's Pretend)

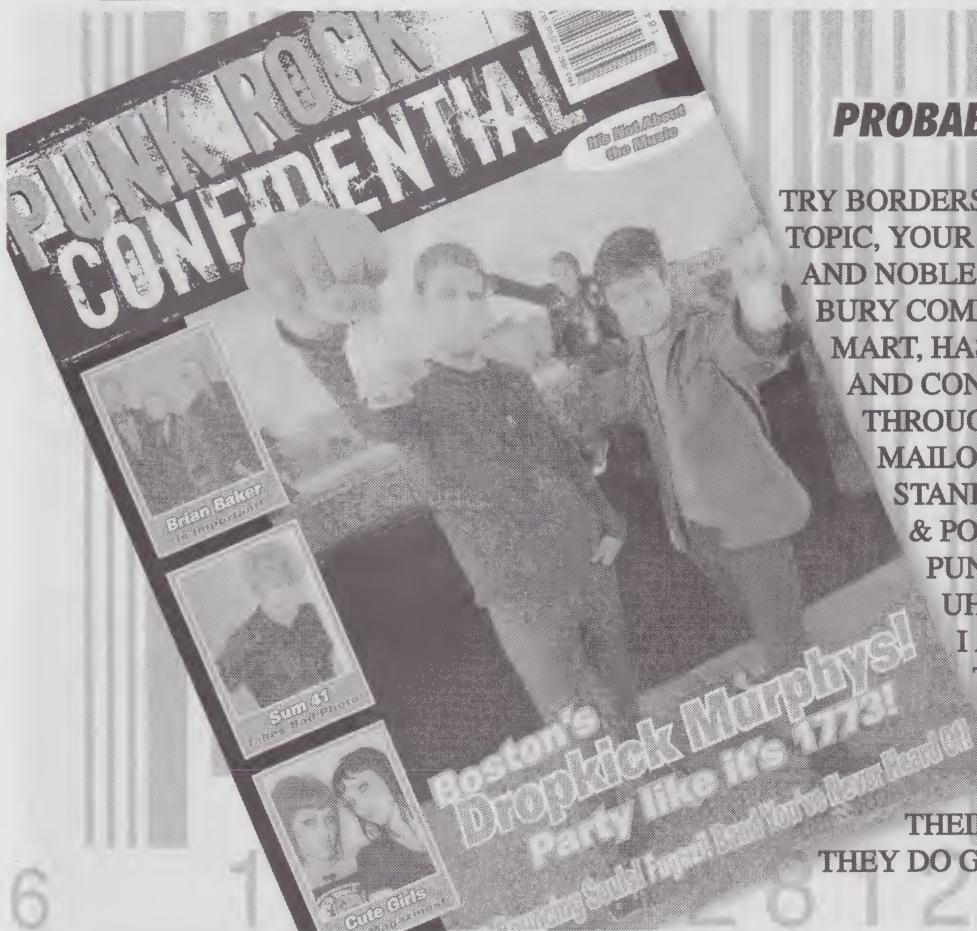
**CRIMINAL DAMAGE:  
No Solution: CD**

I assume that most fans of this band (myself included) initially

checked them out thanks to the "featuring-members-of-Tragedy" line found in most of their distro write-ups. However, there's no trace of Scandinavian thrash or Japanese crust here. Criminal Damage chose the '80s U.K. No Future Records route (think Blitz, Attak, Red Alert, etc.) while managing to avoid the pub-centric, tough guy cliché typically associated with the genre. All the tried and true staples are present; group choruses, Chuck Berry leads, downstroke power chords, but the thoughtful lyrical content sets Criminal Damage far apart from their boots-and-braces brethren. Fist-pumping street punk rock for smart kids. —Dave Williams (Feral Ward, www.feralward.com)

**DAS LLAMAS: World War: CD**

I am probably going to get kicked out of the Seattle Scene Clubhouse for saying this, but Das Llamas doesn't really do anything for me. It's not bad by any means, and I can see why a lot of people would dig it: new wave and dance influences weave into punk drive and good old-fashioned rock'n'roll cockiness, with solid vocals and competent musicianship. I'd dance to it in a club or bob my head along in a friend's car, but I wouldn't pick it out to play at home. I've heard nothing but good about them from local press, friends, and acquaintances, so this may just be a perfect example of an album being unable to live up to too much hype. —Sarah Shay (Aviation)



## FALL 2007 ISSUE PROBABLY STILL ON SALE

TRY BORDERS, WALDENBOOKS, HOT TOPIC, YOUR TEENAGE SISTER, BARNES AND NOBLE, THE AIRPORT, NEWBURY COMICS, QUIMBY'S, WALMART, HASTINGS, LEXINGTON AND CONCORD, WATERLOO, OR THROUGH LAST GASP, MIDHEAVEN MAILORDER, KUSTOMNEWS-STAND.COM, ANGRY YOUNG & POOR, INTERPUNK, SMART-PUNK, A-F RECORDS, NO IDEA, UHH...REVOLVER...NO WAIT, I ALREADY MENTIONED THEM, THAT'S MIDHEAVEN...UHH, THERE'S THAT OTHER PITTSBURGH ONE TOO...CAN'T REMEMBER THEIR NAME RIGHT NOW BUT THEY DO GARAGE-Y STUFF...

3

**DEADLINE: 8/28: CD**

Ah, DC. Much was its influence on a young East L.A. punker kid in the early '80s, and few of those bands from the nation's capitol held sway like Deadline. Their three tracks on the *Flex Your Head* compilation just seemed so different on an album filled with some truly unique bands—Minor Threat, Iron Cross, Red C, Government Issue, and the mighty, mighty Void—and just sounded so much darker and, dare I say it, more mature than others on that revered record, even though they were essentially mining the same territory. "Stolen Youth" quickly became a part of the earliest of my band's set lists, although we never did it proper justice. For the most part, those songs were all we had to go on from this band, until Peterbilt released 8/28 towards the end of that decade, whereupon it went almost as quickly as it came and has not been seen since. Thankfully, someone has decided that being out of print for two decades was long enough, and another generation of kids now has the opportunity to glean some influence from this unsung powerhouse. Those who like their hardcore loud, fast, and direct will be more than happy with what's on here, but just as important are the slower tunes, which are sick with unexpected chord changes, lyrics much more accomplished than "the president sucks/go screw a duck/I have a rad truck/fuck fuck fuck," and is steeped with a passion that just doesn't rear its head enough these days. I may be an old East L.A. punker dude these

days, but these guys can still get the blood boilin' in all the right ways. File this under "holy shit, how does anyone survive without this in their collection?" —Jimmy Alvarado (Peterbilt)

**DENY EVERYTHING:  
*Fire This Time*: CD**

I really love this album. Admittedly, I grabbed this CD mainly because the band was named after the Circle Jerks song and my convoluted thought process went something like this "Circle Jerks = godlike, therefore, this band = good maybe..." What I discovered is some excellent melodic hardcore that's pissed off in all the right ways. These guys fall on a very pleasant middle ground that is so narrow that I didn't even realize existed before listening to this. The band is just a bit more aggro than Kid Dynamite, but ever so slightly more melodic than Paint It Black. I'm saying this partially because the bassist is wearing a Paint It Black shirt in the booklet, but I find this description fits the band perfectly. Did I mention these guys are from Germany? Well, they're from Germany. In the tradition of many of the best hardcore albums, this clocks in at around twenty minutes for fifteen songs (many of which manage to include at least one breakdown), so get it and prepare to memorize some lyrics for the inevitable stage-diving sing-along if these guys ever tour state-side. —Adrian Salas (Yo-Yo)

**DICKTIONHEAD: *Because the Scene Could Suck Less*: CD**

True, it could suck less, but this definitely ain't helping matters much. —Jimmy Alvarado (ODS/Dicktionhead)

**DIRECT FROM HOLLYWOOD  
CEMETERY: *Six Feet under the Mason-Dixon Line*: 7"**

Hell yes! They used to be a Halloween party band in Richmond back in the olden days. They did cool, spooky cover songs like the Misfits and Screaming Jay Hawkins. Now they all live in Brooklyn, have written some of their own songs and put out a record, and it's great. Funny, goofy '60s frat rock with a "Monster Mash" kinda feel. The Farfisa and occasional hipster snarl add a Murder City Devils aspect, but not too annoyingly. It's a good, fun record. I haven't seen them play in ten years, but they were great then. Buy this record and maybe they'll go on tour again. —Ben Snakepit (Go Ape!)

**DISNihil: Self-titled: CD**

Speedy hardcore with breakdowns that would be right at home on Bridge 9. Not as much grit as I prefer to have with hardcore and more breakdowns than I personally like. Good as most, better than some. —Mike Frame (Chainsaw Safety)

**DRIVER OF THE YEAR:*****...Will Destroy You*: CD**

DOTY is synthy, glam-flavored, bass-heavy; like a funky Talking

Heads (they cover "Girlfriend Is Better" just in case you don't come to that conclusion on your own). It has one of the trippiest album covers I've ever seen. Seriously, it makes me kind of uncomfortable (but since I assume that was their aim, cheers). —Sarah Shay (Future Appletree/Nail In The Coffin)

**ELDORADO AND THE RUCKUS:  
*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*: CD**

The break up of the Porch Ghouls was, indeed, a crying shame. Even more difficult is the fact that it freed up Sun Records aficionado and frontman Eldorado del Rey to concoct this ridiculous, emo new wave bastardization of Memphis blues and garage. Apparently, the album is titled after the Philip K. Dick story that became the film *Blade Runner*, which explains, well, pretty much everything. The resonator guitar adds a great Pell Mell touch, but when mixed with repetitive electronic "drum triggering," the result is disquieting. On the same parallel plane as Electric 6 and as uncomfortable as Buck Rogers running through the Twilight Zone with a room temperature speculum. —Jessica T (Big Foot)

**EXPLODING HEARTS, THE:  
*Shattered*: LP**

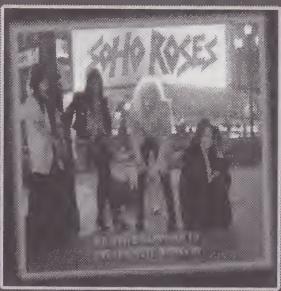
2003 seems so close to now when listening to The Exploding Hearts. Out of the tragedy of all but one member

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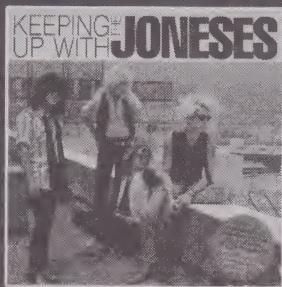
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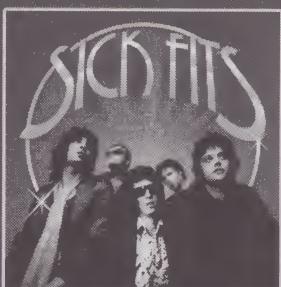
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dying in a van crash on their way back home, it's the most bitter-sweet aural post card possible: the release, for the first time on vinyl in one place, of all their singles (some of which hit around \$500 a piece on Ebay, days after the crash, you savages), unreleased final recordings, and alternate mixes. (The CD version of this came out last year, but my heart's in vinyl.) Ever see people with their heads down, crying, but with a slight smile? That's my initial response to *Shattered*. It's some of the best modernizations of power pop and punk—from The Jam and Elvis Costello—to modern Northwest punk—from The Briefs, Tranzmitors, and Epoxies—all played with such confidence and swagger that the songs themselves sound like monuments. And then comes the sobering fact that The Exploding Hearts will never release anything ever again. But least there's a last testament... and it's great. The final irony's doubly thick because they died right near the middle-of-nowhere, on-the-way-to-somewhere-better small town I was born in. —Todd (Dirtnap)

**FIRST TO LEAVE: Forging a Future: CD**  
San Fran outfit with distorted guitars, cool vocal melodies, and a whole lotta rock'n'roll pep. The second track is called "My Aim Is True," but, amazingly enough, it is not an Elvis Costello cover. Spirited hi-jinks dudes! Produced by J. Robbins, he gives the record his patented "tools and chrome" finish to great effect. I

like "Drag the Lake" and "You're the Canyons" specifically. Expect great things from these rascallions. —Sean Koepenick (Wednesday)

#### **FIX MY HEAD: Self-titled: Cassette**

The dinosauric part of me that staunchly resists change wants to give these guys two points for doing their part to keep the cassette format alive. And a few more for kicking out some pretty blazing thrash stuff ala Reagan SS and/or Cut The Shit in such an expedient manner. It's over before you know it. —Keith Rosson (Fix My Head)

#### **FLATLINERS, THE: The Great Awake: CD**

Damn! I got relegated down to the generic paper sleeve with the record label logo and sticker indicating what release it is promo. This is a first from Fat to Me. In the past, I would always get a retail-ready package. At least it's not a CD-R like some labels have been sending lately. Oh, well. New signing on the label and the band's sophomore release. Kind of reminds me of early Rise Against but this band also melds in elements of reggae and ska to their music. Very melodic and the music is well played. Should be well received by the fans of the label. As usual, a well-produced Fat release. —Donofthedead (Fat)

#### **FLESHIES: Baby: LP**

Fleshies' 2000 self-released demo is now available on vinyl thanks to SF's Thrillhouse Records. Fleshies are one

of my favorite bands and this is just another reason why. The scattered and relentless barbed blob of noise that they tend to create is at an all-time high on these recordings. The masterpiece that was their 2006 release, *Scrape the Walls*, was an amazing display of innovative, unconventional punk with pure pop sensibility and flawless production. *Baby* is very much the opposite—still unconventional, yet pure East Bay-gritty-warehouse-show-malt-liquor-taco-truck-pissed-off-fuzzed-out-fury of rock. A couple of these songs went on to show up on later recordings. After all, it was a demo. —Daryl (Thrillhouse)

#### **FOR SCIENCE: Way Out of Control: CD**

It's Alive's first CD release comes as a surprise because it isn't your conventional pop punk fanfare. While poppy melodies and harmonies are commonplace, this band is hardly describable by that phrase: pop punk. Vocals are Bent Outta Shape-y and the music reminds me of the Zoinks. All the songs are catchy and delivered with a passion that is hardly matched by any other band these days. The only song that I could have done without is the slow, folksy "Just Pray." No worries, though. That leaves seven other gems to keep me company. —Mr. Z (It's Alive)

#### **FOUR EYES, THE: Five Songs (About Video Games and One about Something Else): CD**

Video games, ugh. MMORPG's,

double ugh. And, while I recognize the Four Eyes as the American Institution that they are, Geek-Squad-ifying the Dead Milkmen and/or Kung Fu Monkeying Weezer is not the type of activity that spurs me to rip tunage to my Xbox 360 overmuch. Comes with an entire live album as a bonus track, which actually puts the value of MMORPG-based love songs in perspective when weighed against the slings and arrows of predictably ironic faux-arena rock. I continue to attempt to keep this record's existence hidden from *World of Warcraft* players, simply to deny them pleasure. *Schaufenfreude* kicks ass! **BEST SONG:** "Group With You" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Balrog Bop" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** I have had the dubious pleasure of creating not one but two Neverwinter Nights ((see track 6)) mods in my life; one involved a city full of nothing but prostitutes and plague victims, the other was a loose interpretation of "West Side Story," with orcs and mummies, but I put too many giant beetles in the level and I would always get killed before I could go talk to the orc girl and win her heart. —Rev. Norb (Thrillhouse)

#### **FRIENDS OF THE RED ARMY FACTION: Fuck Yr Violence: Cassette**

Aesthetically, this thing is totally crappy—sloppy, hand-written lyrics and muffled-as-shit sound quality make it a fairly hard listen. But I gotta admit, there's a charm here that can't be denied: it sounds like it was

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recorded at a practice (at one point, you can actually hear the band trying to figure out the parts of the song before they start playing), the lyrics are short but politically spot-on, and there's just such a lovely air of "this is a blast, dude, who gives a fuck if you like it?" It's like a shot of B-12 in the ass after slogging through all these one-sheets and promo glossies. Actually reminds me a lot of Riot Cop if they were super sloppy and recorded their stuff on a Fisher Price boombox. Yeah, I'll admit it; I had a good time with this one. —Keith Rosson (*Sharpie Fumes*)

#### GATOS SALVAJES, LOS: *Complete Recordings: CD*

Los Gatos were one of the big names in Argentina's rock scene of the late-'60s/early-'70s. Their single "La Balsa/Ayer Nomás" was a huge hit in their home country and brought the band great success in the ensuing years. Before all of that, however, they were Los Gatos Salvajes, a small but potent band heavily influenced by Britain's Merseybeat sound and not-so-small fans of the Beatles. In this first incarnation's short career, they managed a few singles and a full-length, all of which, while not over the top like U.S. bands like the Wailers and the Sonics, are competent additions to the genre and show the seeds of what was to come later. This is the first international CD release of Los Gatos Salvajes' repertoire, featuring their full-length, singles

and B-sides, live tracks and some home recordings of lead singer Litto doing a little composing, and no doubt a welcome one, seeing as they've become something of a cult band amongst Beat fans. In all, this is some good stuff for those sympathetic to the genre. —Jimmy Alvarado (*No Fun*)

#### GHADDAR / PANACEJA: Split: 7"

Ghaddar: mid-tempo powerviolence from Pennsylvania. Songs about such things as lazy DIY promoters, killing pigs, and how mislead religious people are. Pretty formulaic, but you know, curry is a formula too, and that shit's delicious. Panacea: super-intense, raging powerviolence from Croatia. If they had more room than half a 7", I bet they would have been able to lay down some really ripping shit. You know that They Live 12" on 625? Something that good, I bet, but without the rapping. —Daryl (*Feral Kid*)

#### GLEAM GARDEN: *In the One-Sided World: 7"*

Oh cool, a one-sided seven inch. That's kinda neat, but why did they bother to press grooves with no sound onto the blank side? That's weird. Gleam garden play classic Snuffy Smile-style punk. It's overproduced, a la Minority Blues Band; it's fast and melodic like the Urchin; and it's got the trademark heavy Leatherface influence in the lyrics. A few years ago, everyone would go out of their way trying to describe a lot of the Snuffy Smile bands without

comparing them to each other, but nowadays the "Snuffy Smile sound" is just as easily recognizable as any other punk label that's developed their own style (Fat Wreck, Dischord, and Lookout, to name a few) and that's something that Gleam Garden should be proud of. This is a weird, good little record. —Ben Snakepit (*Snuffy Smiles*)

#### GOVERNMENT WARNING: *Arrested: 7"EP*

I just finished watching a fun bicycle movie, *Breaking Away*, from 1979. It was sorta unnerving that a film shot on location in Bloomington, IN close to thirty years ago had a lot of the same fashions that are being picked up in hipster circles in the U.S. now. (Dude, I don't want to know your religion from across the room. Loosen those shorts a bit.) The Necros released their first self-titled 7" a couple years after 1979, and it's a bleak, broken, jagged, and fast testament to the crumbling of America's foundations. It sounds like music made by the people at the bottom who constantly get crushed. That made me think this: hipster irony (in fashion and music) is dispossessed, disposable (they'll be onto something "new" soon), and future-less and past-less, where as these pure strains of hardcore that keep recurring—the type that Government Warning is in the skin of—doesn't make me feel like I'm hopping into the throwback machine because they've inherited the initial

spirit, reclaimed the ghost, and are bearing the weight now. Shit's fucked up-eder more than ever, and here's the soundtrack. —Todd (*Grave Mistake*)

#### GREATEST HITS: *For a Good Time Call: CD*

I am such a sucker for this style. It has to be pretty lame glampunk for me to not like it and this disc is pure ear candy. They take from the full spectrum: moody Hanoi and Lords stuff, popper stuff, and Thunders worship. Songs are a little on the long side and this is best taken in a few smaller doses than in one sitting. Fans of Hollywood Teasze, Trash Brats, Rick Blaze And The Ballbusters, and Kevin K will find a lot to like here. —Mike Frame (*Desert Island*)

#### HELL, THE: Self-titled: CD

Fast and furious Zeke / Speedealer style mayhem. This shit is pretty excellently fast and rocking, like Turbonegro smoking a chopped-up Dwarves album out of a light bulb. Another win for Carbondale! —Ben Snakepit (*Let's Pretend*)

#### HEY GIRL: *Spill Your Guts!!: LP*

In the earlier part of this decade, the Bay Area was blessed with a group of guys who played in various bands like Los Rabbis, Tommy Lasorda, and Poser Posse. They made some amazingly crazy punk rock and I feel privileged to have seen them the few times I did, and have the recordings I have of them. I actually only have one recording



**"Innocent girl befriends motley gang of fellow punks who end up turning her share house into a sea of sleeping bag-clad bodies, and eventually ends up with the honours of watching over Johnny Thunders as he passes out in her living room, and preparing a dinner party for the members of Black Flag... It's a story of how our music finds us, beating us over the head and dragging us on a soundtracked journey into life." —Logged Off, Australia**

**"A must in every punk and hardcore kid's bookshelf." —Quebec Hardcore News**

**"Damn hard to put down." —Shredding Paper Magazine**

and it's the Los Rabbis CD that was on S.P.A.M. Records. That CD features a song called "Hey Girl," which I can only assume influenced this band's name. Hey Girl remind me of Los Rabbis' poppier moments, and "Hey Girl" was, without a doubt, their poppiest: same multi-vocaled, lo-fi, distorted, slop punk with just enough feedback to give it effect but not make it annoying. Bad ass. -Daryl (Thrillhouse)

## HIDDEN SPOTS:

#### **Important Transmissions: 7" EP**

Yeah, I know, making DIY punk music's hard and its benefits sometime get fuckin' lost in being scraped down to nubs, but it's bands like the Hidden Spots that reveal one of its secret weapons: strong-ass regionalism (not necessarily by geography). You see, there are these eddies of groups of bands around the world that continually morph and continue to rule, like The Riverboat Gamblers/High Tension Wires/ Marked Men/ Potential Johns brain trust and Sexy/ Chickenhead/ ADD/C/ Future Virgins/ Horrible Odds/ Hidden Spots think tank. I don't want to say "geographically," because folks move, but stay in contact, and the music strain's in 'em, regardless of what type of dirt's underneath their feet. These family trees retain that nice, solid, oaky essence through all the bands, but each one is as distinct as the veins in a leaf. Enough of the tree hugging. The Hidden Spots take that unshakable earnestness of The Jack Palance Band (and the same

voice: Mike Pack)—catchy, but not too sweet, with little flourishes that reveal themselves after repeated listens—along with the rumble of Leatherface to churn out four songs that light a new spark. —Todd (ADD)

### HIGH TENSION WIRES: *Midnight Cashiers*, CD

Reminds me of a combination of New Mexico's Shang-A-Lang and TTK's Sean Cole songs. This hasn't sunk its teeth in deep yet, but a few more listens and it just might. -Mr. Z (Dirtnap)

HITCH: We Are Electric! CD

**Belgium trio sprinkles in a little Kerosene 454 with a splash of Bluetip. The angular, disjointed riffage is there. But this band, after ten years of slogging it out on both sides of the Atlantic, bring their own pizzazz to the proceedings. "Radiation Winter Part II" has a really cool vibe. Looking to hear more from this band in the future.**

#### **HUNCHBACK: Inside/Out b/w**

**Song for Dave Berg: 7"**

Some lighter output from a (normally) much noisier band. Two songs, one of which is from their upcoming LP, the other is exclusive. Topics covered include Courtney Love, and buds, and there's a very jangly, mid/late '90s alternative rock vibe to it (as opposed to most of their '80s underground/Killed By Death output). This record costs a dollar. Pick it up. —Joe Evans III (Don Giovanni)

#### **IDLE KIDS: The Factory Lines: CDEP**

INSTANT ASSHOLE: DULL OR DIE: 7"

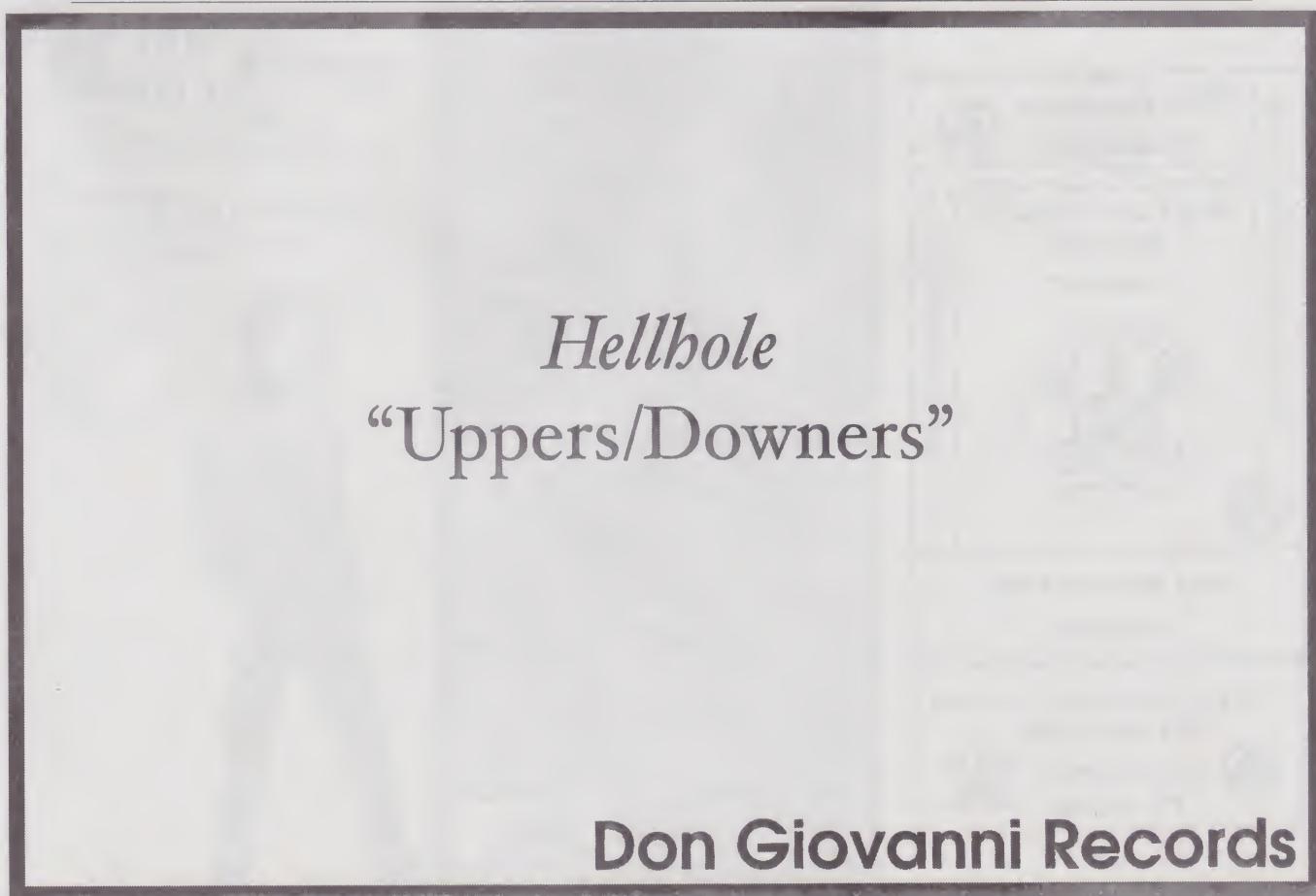
Sloppy, fast, drink, drink, puke  
drink, fuck, fart, drink some more  
punk about driving drunk and being

driven to drink. Wish I had the lyrical prowess to address my drinking problem in every single song like these dudes. Seriously, that's quite an achievement. But, it would be even more monumental if the songs weren't typical Punk Rock 101: felt like I've heard them all done better by other bands in some capacity, and the vocalist emulating Jello Biafra just makes me want to drink, drink, puke, drink, fuck, fart, and drink some more.  
—Dave Disorder (*Tankcrimes*)

#### **INSTANT ASSHOLE: DULL Or Die: 7**

**INSTANT ASSHOLE: D.S.M. OF DEATH**

Brand new follow-up to their debut CD *Confrontational*, I-don't-give-a-shit punk rock that reminds me of many bands from the early '80s. I mean, I can hear bands like the Dead Kennedys, Fang, MDC, and even hints of Stukas Over Bedrock in their songs. I can hear the growth on this release compared to their first release. I feel the length of time together has made the band more cohesive, yet the bile of the lyrics is still there. Once again, the main topic brought up is alcohol. I love to drink, many of you like to drink, and it's totally obvious that they love to drink. The songs feel tighter even though they play a loose style of mid tempo to fast punk. Songs that are like a slap in your face and played with angry conviction. If you're a record nerd like me, you'll dig the cool white with black splatter version that the label sent. —Donoftheadhead (Tankcrimes)



**IRON CROSS:*****Two Piece and a Biscuit: CD***

Here comes the first new recording by Iron Cross in twenty years. I think that they are pretty much the first band from the U.S. to do the whole oi thing. As far as old bands getting back together is concerned, I have much more admiration for those who actually get together to write some new tunes rather than just tour and rehash their glory days. That said, I think this is really bad. Mid tempo oi songs are the order of the day. That's all fine and good, I mean we're not building fusion bombs here. The problem lies in singer Sab Grey's delivery. So bland, so emotionless. I swear that Stephen Hawking could get more emotion out of these tunes than ol' Sab and his monotone. Throw in a piss poor cover of Cocksparrer and call it a comeback. No wait! There's more. The second part of the record is by a new group called Sab Grey And The Royal Americans. Here's where the gold lies on this disc. Seriously? Skinhead country music? The song "Skinhead Girl" is worth the price of admission alone! This disc went from bad to beautifully ridiculous! -Ty Stranglehold (Teenage Heart)

**JAPANTHER: Scuffed up My Huffy: CD**

Not only was Japanther a band to be reckoned with from the first time they played a show or even when they set out on their first tour way back when, but now with the release of this new full-length, they are untouchable. This

album is better than anything they've put out thus far. You better believe it. This time they've struck more than just a nerve... they've struck them all and bruised them good. The samples and intermissions are better than ever, the newfound melodies kick the shit out of anything that ever came out of the '80s new wave scene, and damn me to hell if "\$100 Cover" isn't the best song of 2007. Highly, highly recommended. -Mr. Z (Menlo Park)

**JENNIFERS, THE:*****Colors from the Future: CD***

On the Jennifers' previous EP, John Irvine sang, "That which doesn't kill me/Can still hurt a lot." It's a simple twist on a familiar line and it represents what The Jennifers do so well: tweak what you've heard before. Swirled among the band's kaleidoscope of sounds are glimpses of presumed influences—Television, the Soft Boys, XTC, and R.E.M., among others. Over the years, the labels for the Jennifers' type of music have changed like a James Bond license plate—punk, new wave, indie pop—but the essence remains constant and simple: it's smart guitar pop. Not since the Young Fresh Fellows' *Electric Bird Digest* have I listened to a record so many times in one year. I turn to *Colors from the Future* like most people turn to syndicated sitcoms. It's a fantastic mental pipe cleaner of a record, a disc that clears away the work day. Musically, that is. As was the case with *Electric Bird Digest*,

I've barely scratched the surface with the lyrics on *Colors*. That's likely to take another year or three and I didn't want to wait that long before passing along my two cents on this brilliant record. (Note: The Jennifers do not count in their ranks anyone by that name. There are, however, one John, two Joes, and a Skizz.) —Mike Faloon (Beef Platter, [www.thejennifers.com](http://www.thejennifers.com))

**JUDDER AND THE JACK RABBITS:*****All In: CD***

There was a time in my life when I thought psychobilly was cool. Then I actually heard it. P.S. Corpse paint is stupid. —Bryan Static (Cherry Red)

**KAKKA-HÄTÄ 77:*****Totaalinen Kakkahätä: CD***

I almost refuse to use this term when it comes to reviewing bands, mainly because it's almost meaningless but also because it's used so poorly sometimes, but I think it's a pretty dead on statement to make that Finland's Kakka-hätä 77 is KBD material, and I may be one more asshole using that in a review, but whatever. This CD contains the music from the two 7's this band has released. Angelic Upstarts and early Clash played much pubbier, with lots of hooky backing vocals and a healthy helping of punky goodness. The artwork on the front is a black and white illustration of a gutter punk cross country skiing through a moonlit forest and the back is even funnier. I read on the internet that this CD debuted at #15 on the Finnish

charts and the label is totally baffled that people like it so much. Fucking cool. —Daryl (Combat Rock)

**KILLER DREAMER: Self-titled: 12"**

Killer Dreamer have been squonking out their brand of SoCal punk for years now, yet they never get the credit or attention they deserve. This new record might finally get them that attention. Thirteen tracks of raw, classic hardcore just like the Circle Jerks or Black Flag woulda played it way back in the day. These guys hail from San Pedro, the town that gave the world the Minutemen and Toys That Kill, to name a couple. In that respect, Killer Dreamer has some pretty big shoes to fill, and do a spectacular job of it. Excellent artwork, too: crazy silkscreens and spraypaint and hand-stapled labels. It's a beautiful little testament to DIY. Get this record! —Ben Snakepit (Small Pool)

**KILL YOUR IDOLS:*****Something Started Here: CD***

Here is a compilation CD that collects a bunch, if not all, of Kill Your Idols' loose tracks from comps, splits, and EPs. This is almost overkill to try to listen to all at once. From what I understand, this is also available as a box set of vinyl 7's, and I would have to say, you might want to go that path with this release if you have the means, so you get everything in nice little chunks. Personally, I can't since I don't have a record player (Gasp! Punk rock blasphemy). Kill Your Idols plays straight-ahead '80s-influenced

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hardcore punk that shifts between fast and really fast (with the occasional breakdown), with some very pissed-off, shouted vocals to top everything off. This is the kind of punk rock that all sounds the same the first several times going through it, but after a couple spins you start to realize that it infiltrates your consciousness as you begin to recognize and catch onto different songs. My personal favorite songs are "I Told You So," where the band manages to achieve some sort of huge epicness that makes the song sound monumental, and the cover of Scandal's new wave masterpiece "Goodbye to You." What I really love about the Scandal cover is that if you've ever heard the original, you know that Kill Your Idols' vocalist Andy West is about the last person who should ever attempt to sing the Patty Smyth parts from the song, but the band still manages to pull the song off nicely. I also have to say that the booklet that comes with the CD makes a good case about why physical releases are so much better than just downloading albums. The notes in the booklet are extensive and feel like a mini biography. This compilation might be too much to tackle in one sitting but it's a good way to get better acquainted with Kill Your Idols, whether you're a super fan or looking for a good starting point. —Adrian Salas (Lifeline)

**KNUGEN FALLER: *Lugna Favoriter*: LP**  
Perhaps it's from liking and listening to a lot of Otis Redding, but Knugen

Faller, who could easily be placed in the "throwback ghetto" and dismissed as solely "a Swedish band who likes X-Ray Spex, Josie Cotton, and the Go-Go's," have a ton of soul. Sung entirely in Swedish, it gave me more time to just enjoy the structure of the songs. Aside from the more obvious punk and new wave sign posts, it kinda gets me how similar they are in spirit to many of the early Stax artists: chops galore, but tastefully played. All the instruments are used together to paint a more expansive picture, all rotating time in emphasis. So, in the punk rock lineage, as much as Silvia Sate's great, strident voice, Knugen Faller take the jump-punk-rock-stride of The Saints and Rocket From The Crypt (man, I'm a sucker for well-placed, ska-less horns), and continue to add to the baffling good line of bands coming out of small city of Umeå. Score another for the Ny Vag collective. Highly recommended. —Todd (Wasted Sounds)

#### KOLOKOL: *Flammer og Farger*: LP

There was a lot of controversy in the early part of the year about this release. I kind of forgot about it. It was a disagreement with the band and the label about the booklets. There was an agreement to have the glossy booklets printed in color. But the label decided to print it in black and white because the cost of the entire release would have made the sale price really expensive. So, according to the band, this version is not endorsed by them.

So it's a personal decision if you want to buy U.S. pressing on vinyl, produced under the circumstances stated above, or you can buy the CD that was put out by Sjakk Matt Plater out of Norway or the German LP pressing that just came out on Twisted Chords. I have read the debate and can understand both sides. It probably could have been handled differently so that both sides would have been satisfied. One thing is for certain: this band from Norway is amazing! The band plays a mixture of hardcore punk meets crust with hook-filled rock melodies. The songs are complex and well constructed. They are filled with a variety of textures and an intricately planned use of musical notes. Not average by any means. I like the clean production of this recording. The guitars are distorted but not overblown. The bass sound is smooth and punchy, played with skill and precision. The drums are holding the backbone of the musical experience while driving the notes of the music to forefront. But the contrast of vocals that are delivered with a convincing rage takes the music to a darker level. A truly epic release that should be sought out. —Donofthedead (Moo Cow)

#### LEFTY LOOSIE: *100 Miles an Hour*: CD

This reminds me of This Is My Fist a smidge, but double tempo and more charming. This is the first I'm hearing of this quartet from the rock I hide underneath and I like what I hear.

Poppy but not in an "over-produced, sugary, and gross" way—more in a "dancing with a smile to the pop punk goodness as the rest of the house party spills beer on you" way. I also think the most valuable part of the band is in the lyrics, and thank the heavens this album has a lyric sheet. Fantastic. Hey, the bass player sported a Razorcake shirt for the layout photo shoot. Two extra punk points for her! —Mr. Z (Fast Crowd)

#### LOUIS LINGG AND THE BOMBS: *Conspiracy*: CDEP

International political pop punk fans of the world unite! I don't know how many of you there are, but I think you'll dig Louis Lingg And The Bombs. The Bombs hail from France. They cite U.S. history and they sound like they're from Japan (only the Land of the Rising Sun could cook up a combination of the Ramones, Nine Inch Nails, and Shonen Knife). Then, in the midst of the Technicolor barrage—it's Super Wakey Wakey Kool Aid Sponge Bath Party Fest time—there's a forty-minute lecture on the Haymarket Affair by historian James Green. I don't completely grasp *Conspiracy* but concede its uniqueness. —Mike Faloon (Ultrasound)

#### LOUIS TULLY: 7"

Keyboards certainly have their place in punk rock. From the Screamers to the Spits, the significance of the keyboard must be acknowledged.

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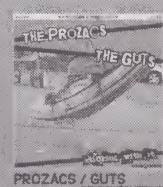


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However, for the most part, I'm not a big fan of keyboards in punk songs. Louis Tully is a good example of why. They play pretty decent Dag Nasty-ish anthemic punk, but with this fucking irritating keyboard that just totally sounds out of place and jars the songs apart like a paint scraper. If this band didn't have a keyboard, they'd be great, but they do, so they aren't. —Ben Snakepit (Repulsion)

**LOZEN: Enemies against Power: CD**  
Lozen is an interesting new art rock duo from Tacoma. This album has a major Melvins influence, although it gets a bit too sludgy for comfort at times. The two women who make up the project call themselves Hozoji and Justice. They both sing, and I'm not sure how they perform live since Hozoji is credited with playing both guitar and bass. Alternating annoying and gripping, *Enemies against Power* is unique enough to warrant checking out. —Art Ettlinger (Australian Cattle God)

**LUDICRA: Fex Urbis, Lex Orbis: CD**  
Boy, talk about the goth calling the metal black! This shit is dark, slow, sad, and creepy. It's got spooky, ethereal stuff going on, and yet it's still metal as fuck. Like Neurosis but slower, it's epic black metal without the juvenile trappings associated with this kinda music. If you're in a bad mood, this is exactly what you need to enjoy it. —Ben Snakepit (Alternative Tentacles)

#### MANNEQUIN MEN: "Private School" b/w "Sewers": 7"

I'm imagining that every member of this band has a Mudhoney tattoo on one arm and a Led Zeppelin tattoo on the other. I'm also imagining that they received these tattoos incredibly late into a rainy October night while they were all attending a boot camp run by transvestite drill sergeants. If I'm wrong and these four guys don't have those tattoos and never attended some homoerotic boot camp, one thing I'm sure is that these guys sure do know how to make some awesome rock music. —Daryl (Criminal IQ)

#### McRAD / FRONTSIDE FIVE: 50/50 Split: CD

I think it's true that the smilin' buddhas in charge of revmats at *Razorcake* must know what I like. I mean, it doesn't take Santa Claus-like ability to know that I love skate rock, but it's nice to know that someone out there at HQ knows it. Oh right... the review. Frontside Five kicks it off with their brand of crossover skate thrash that beats you senseless and leaves you for dead in the bottom of the pool. I swear that this band is like injecting pure adrenalin. This is skate rock! I was pretty stoked to hear some new stuff from McRad. For those who don't know, McRad is one of the original purveyors of what became known as "skate rock" in the '80s. Appearing on *Thrasher* compilations as well as their own wax, McRad has always brought the thrash... Until

now, that is. I really don't know what to say. There is one song that I really like, but other than that there is some dub type stuff, a few live tracks from 1983, a radio interview, and some tracks with main man Chuck Treece playing with his kids (which is a cool concept in its own right, but not for this record). It just left me feeling let down. I do have to say that the Frontside Five tracks are more than worth picking this up, though. —Ty Stranglehold (Fivecore)

#### McRAD / FRONTSIDE FIVE: Split: CD

Frontside Five: Beach punk-sounding skate punk with some metal riffing that was like a mix of Pennywise meets the Stitches. McRad: Former pro skateboarder and one-time member of the Bad Brains, Chuck Treece's musical on and off again, long-time music project. Feels as unfocused as the Bad Brains' *Build a Nation*. Dub, punk, rock, and, I believe, ambient. —Donofthedead (Fivecore)

#### MEASURE [SA], THE / O PIONEERS!!!: Split 7"

The Measure [SA] was issue #39's cover band. I think I've figured out why I like them so much. They're romantic in the original tradition. There's a lot to lose. There are scars, decay, and destruction. Things are far from perfect, but the band's fostered this innate, driving force to create beauty from the ruin. And The Measure [SA] remind me of that fact when so few other bands do. Great

songs. O Pioneers!!!: Having been aware of their early material and now this, it's more than a little disarming how they're paralleling Against Me!'s song craft over time. It's like OP!!! has spent all their songwriting time using a mirror (a duplicate image incapable of a unexpected move) and a microscope (scrutinizing a pre-existing song's tiny components and hoping it to reveal "secrets") of another band, instead of attempting much of an original vision. Flat-out weird, because, dudes, Against Me! already exists, people know about them, and you'll always be beholden to them musically. Cloning doesn't sound like a lot of fun to me. —Todd (Kiss Of Death)

#### MENZINGERS, THE: A Lesson in the Abuse of Information Technology: CD

This wasn't at all what I was expecting from a Go-Kart release, but I was mighty pleased after a few listens. The Menzingers have a sound that blends good old-fashioned punkness with the better aspects of (dare I say it?) mainstream alternative. I'm not entirely sure how that last sentence should be understood, but that's what's in my head. Some fast stuff here, some anthemic, and some slow; some sweet stuff, some bitter, and the band has upped the ante on the Clash's "Straight to Hell." This version is loud, loud, loud, and bitter in the way of the complete desperation after the cops kill your dog is bitter. I like this record. —The Lord Kveldulf (Go-Kart)

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**MIDNIGHT CREEPS:**

**Singles/Splits/Demos/Live: CD + DVD**  
 Contains, as the title suggests, various 7's, demos, live stuff and their split with Capo Regime. They're essentially a bar punk band—and are generally pretty good at it. But they're also given to playing long dirge-rock tunes that sound as if they're trying to exhume the ghosts off of some dusty *Raw Power* 8-track (see the slow, guitar solo-riffic "Coffin of the Boston T," etc.) that doesn't really work. Generally, I could get behind a band like this (like I said, it's pretty catchy) despite the fact that their songs have names like "Toilet Bowl Suicide" and "What the Twat Wants." What ruins this band for me is the fact that the vocalist has an unfortunate tendency to sing in this deep, operatic voice that just comes across as A) really corny and B) like she wishes she was in another kind of band altogether. When she just screeches, the stuff's generally pretty decent. The accompanying DVD features selections from some live shows in which said vocalist A) blows huge tendrils of snot out of her nose, B) disrobes down to bra and panties, C) sits on some fifteen-year-old kid's face and orders him to guzzle the beer she's positioned against her crotch. Also features a short film made by and starring the band called *Menstrual Institution*. It doesn't really make any sense at all, but the terrible acting actually makes the movie more disturbing. The best part is when the guitarist dry-humps his teddy bear.

This was one weird fucking band.  
 —Keith Rosson (Rodent Popsicle)

**MODERN LIFE IS WAR:*****My Love, My Way: CD***

Hmmm...is this punk with neo-metal flavorings, or neo-metal heavily influenced by punk? Not sure, but most likely the former. Heavy and gruff, possible knuckle-dragging flavors. Some speedy stuff, but mostly not. Lots of mid-tempo. Sounds like yer being throttled by a gorilla. For some reason, to me it sounds like 76% Uncertain on horse steroids. If it were fifteen years ago, this would be on Revelation. I liked this quite a bit, but I never have anything coherent to say about bands such as this because I'm not an aficionado of such sounds. Sorry, guys. —The Lord Kveldulfr

**MOUTH SEWN SHUT:*****Doomed Future Today: CD***

Say what? Doom-laden reggae? Ska with crust overtones? From a purely visual standpoint, it was pretty easy to initially write this band off, or at least assume I knew exactly what I was getting. You know: brutal name in scary font. Dead bird on cover. Skull on back cover. LP version by Profane Existence, etcetera. This is me generalizing, right? The jaded reviewer who's heard it all. Then I put the CD thing in the player thing and for a few minutes I'm hearing pretty much what I expected. Then the third song, "World War 3 Is Coming" hits

my ears and...they're playing reggae. Yes, it's filtered through backpacks and a big love for Amebix. Yes, the guy's still belting his guts out. Yes, their pedals are still in the red. But I'll be goddammed if they're not playing a weird reggae/ska/crust amalgamation on at least half of this record. And I'm not talking Citizen Fish "clean guitars with horns" either—this stuff's ugly. It's dark, dense, and simultaneously manages to be toe-tapping and mired neck-deep in gloom. Lyrics are despondent and generally pretty fucking hopeless. While there are moments on *Doomed Future Today* that aren't quite successful, there's a lot more that showcases a band that's just on, and doing it by melding two genres I wouldn't have tried pairing up in a million years. So if you want to measure a band's success by, you know, radio airplay and online downloads and stuff, this one won't do much for you. But if you want to measure success the fact that they've consistently engaged the listener and kept shit really interesting throughout fourteen songs, then Mouth Sewn Shut's coming out on top.—Keith Rosson (Rodent Popsicle)

**NEKROMANTIX:*****Life Is a Grave & I Dig it!!!: CD***

The influential scene star Kim Nekromantix is approaching twenty years in the biz, and has adjusted to life in the U.S., a major line-up change, and a deal with the ever-burgeoning Hellcat [Epitaph] label—forces

that resulted in a complete sound overhaul. *Life Is a Grave* reveals a depth of musicianship; a darker and more complete interpretation of the musical components that are the psycho cocktail. It's a polished, mature, and sated release more akin to calculating serial killers than the crimes of passion which hallmarked *Curse of the Coffin* and *Brought Back to Life*. Fits into the new mold of psychobilly: subdued and balanced bass, Damned-style vocals, and tricky multi-genre guitar fingering. —Jessica T (Hellcat)

**NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD:**  
***Don't Believe: CD***

Ya, this is a fun one. It's been a rarity these days for a good hardcore record to drop in my lap, but I'm glad that this one did. This was my first exposure to these guys, and I'm happily impressed because I love both Verbal Assault and Swiz, and New Mexican Disaster Squad remind me of a chunky blending of both. And while I make heavy recourse to it, I really don't like writing about a band by comparing them to another band, but if the shoe fits, goddammit... Lots of good hardcore coming out these days takes that "classic" '80s sound and updates it. I'm really happy that I don't have to say that about this record; it has a mid-'80s groove to it, and that's the way it should be, at least with this band, at any rate. Good stuff. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Jade Tree)

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## NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD: *Peace with Nothing*: Digital EP

Razorcake usually tends to frown upon reviewing digital-only releases, but this one gets a free pass because it's going to be released as a 7" vinyl soon, and also the nice people at Jade Tree went through the trouble of burning the album onto CD, so, technically, it's a hardcopy now. New Mexican Disaster Squad plays melodic hardcore (i.e. 7 Seconds, Kid Dynamite) that manages to sound fresh and energetic. At only five songs, the EP is a nice little jolt of adrenaline that's over so quickly you might want to put it on loop two or three times. The album contains three originals which are all excellent, a cover of Government Issue's "Understand" (I honestly only know that, because the press sheet said so), and the final track is a cover of 7 Seconds' "Here's Your Warning." Now the 7 Seconds cover sounds exactly like the original, but this is a case of "if it's not broken why fix it?" to me. Well, in all fairness, they do change the "Now it's 1984" line so that it's actually relevant. These guys don't pull off a lot of tricks in their sound, but they're good at what they do, so they don't really need to. After all, there are too many bands that turn to shit after they discover the magic of metal guitar solos. —Adrian Salas (Jade Tree)

## NEW MODEL ARMY: *High*: CD

At this point in their twenty-plus year career, the New Model Army and this particular devoted fan face different problems, in regard to their music.

Their problem is trying to reintroduce themselves to a neglected North American market, something made even more challenging by the authorities' recent refusal of visas for a U.S. tour. 2005's slate of double-CD remastered editions of some of their finest recordings—*No Rest for the Wicked* (1985), *The Ghost of Cain* (1986), *Thunder and Consolation* (1989), and the slightly-too-gothy *Impurity* (1990)—should help to spread awareness, with their dozens of excellent/memorable songs placing them slightly below the Clash in terms of populist appeal. (Don't ask me to locate them in regard to Crass. I can't. It should say something, though, that Crass and the Clash are the two significant points of reference). Singer-songwriter Sullivan's unique, working-class-Brit growl and his gift for writing probing, thought-provoking, and often politically challenging lyrics and setting them to really catchy, near-classic rock structures places him way up there, by me; why they don't have a larger following here has always been a puzzle. My problem is a bit different: having followed the New Model Army eagerly since the mid-1980s, I very nearly have "enough" of their music to keep me happy. You know how it is—sometimes, when you have eight great studio discs by a band you like, you really just don't need a ninth. (Who the hell cares about Sonic Youth's *Rather Ripped*, for instance, that also owns the entirety of their SST catalogue, and their first few discs for Geffen? How much Sonic Youth do you listen to in a

week, anyhow?). Maybe that was why I didn't bother with *Strange Brotherhood* (1998) and didn't at all dig *Carnival*, the NMA's 2005 offering. Aside from one standout track on that disc, "Another Imperial Day," which is the best song I've heard yet about globalization, there really wasn't that much on it that hadn't been done better before by the same band—or, well, by Justin Sullivan and his previous collaborators, since their lineup has changed a few times. To a near-saturated fan like myself, the disc was okay, but it wasn't necessary. For both the band's purposes, and mine, *High* (2007) serves far better. The songwriting has more energy than *Carnival*; tunes like "Wired" are faster to catch you, more immediate in their rewards, while the intelligence of the band's songwriting is abundantly clear throughout. "Bloodsports," about the tedious human need of war, will probably prove to be a classic, and "One of the Chosen," a scarily believable song about the appeal of cults and fanaticism to lost non-believers, is beyond a doubt one of their finest moments, seeming almost novelistic in the degree to which it gets inside the "main character's" headspace. There are glimpses into human psychology that I've never seen put to song before ("Nothing Dies Easy," about the stubbornness of things, in the face of change) and what seems, compared to the pagan environmentalism of Sullivan's past, a rather new attitude toward progress; at times ("Into the Wind"), he almost seems breath-taken by the immensity

of human ambition and hunger, more than he is terrified. The title and title track don't refer to drugs, by the way, but to looking down at the world from a godlike perspective—the sort of vantage Nietzsche would describe as Hyperborean. "The movers move, the shakers shake/ The winners write the history/ But from high on the high hills it all looks like nothing." Let's hope this newfound maturity doesn't keep him from being pissed off about stuff; Sullivan is damned good at being pissed off. —Allan MacInnis (Attack Attack)

## NO NO ZERO: *Rough Stuff*: LP

Given the primo packaging on this thing (it came with two really nice silkscreens, and the cover features a rad ink drawing of a monkey and leopard about to kick the shit out of each other) I was a little surprised to find an entire album lyrically devoted to extensive assplay and jizzing on '70s European porn stars. It's all done in a kind of garage/surf hybrid, fronted by a dude who's trying pretty hard at sounding like Lux Interior. There's the occasional stand-up bass and vibraphone, which adds an almost '60s psychedelic twang to things. So if that sounds interesting, and you're stoked to have finally found a band that's written songs called "Taco Wagon," "Ass Commando," and "Why Won't You Let Me Fuck You?" then I've got a record I'd be happy to give you. Call before you come over. —Keith Rosson (Folk Brand)

## GLEN REYNOLDS

### "In Between Days"

"In Between Days has plenty of Brit Rock influences, but mostly what it has is expert songcraft. Mr. Reynolds formerly of the band Chomsky has a sharp knack for melody." —Dallas Morning News  
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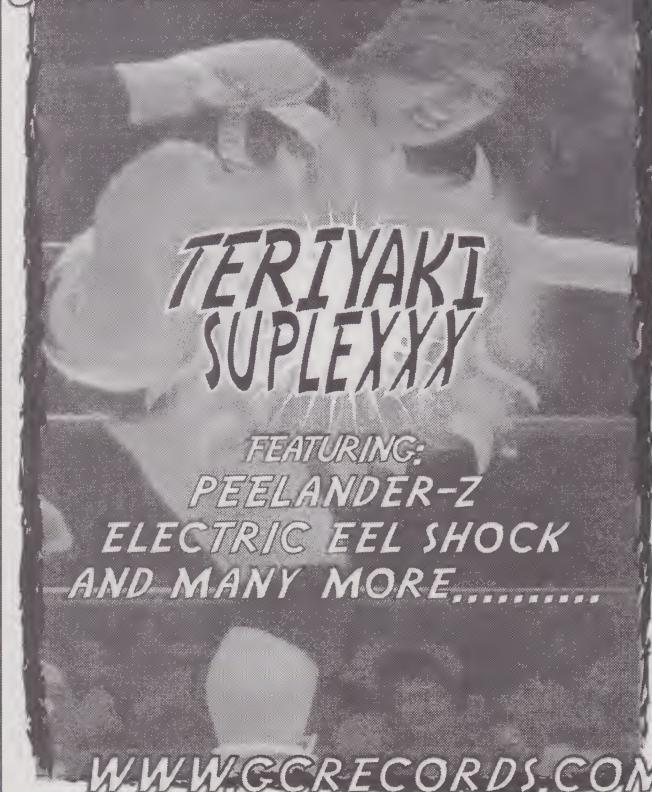
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**NUX VOMICA: A Civilized World: CD**  
 Gallops and palm-mutes galore. Frantic metal peppered here and there with acoustic guitar. I don't really think I'm doing this thing justice—I actually really like it, and the Accused and Cryptic Slaughter's usually about as far as my metal tastes reach. Best conclusion I can come up with is if Fingerprint decided to get back together and grow their hair out. Given the air of apocalypica that visually shrouds this thing, and the corny one sheet touting how great the band is (do those things actually do anything positive at all? Someone needs to do some extensive market research). I was preparing myself to not like this. Instead, I'm mentally high-fiving Nux Vomica for being a smart, kick-ass metal band that's put out a ferocious, topical, tough-as-nails record. —Keith Rosson (Aborted Society)

#### OLD TIME RELIJUN: *Catharsis in Crisis*: CD

These guys make Wesley Willis sound like Asia. —Sean Koepenick (K)

#### OLDE GHOST: *Totally: 7"EP*

Suggestion to whoever wrote the one sheet: don't name drop Drive Like Jehu and Hot Snakes when the band you're pumping is pretty much a straight-ahead modern punk band with screamed-rasped vocals, heavy tuning, and weight. Whereas John Reis, Gar Wood, and Co. made songs in which the notes could be made into maps of different, freaky, and badass

worlds, Olde Ghost's music is more or less a straight line with a couple of small swerves and pebbles being kicked up. Like End On End, perhaps, or the less interesting God Hates Computers tracks? Nice chipboard packaging and it came with a CDEP, too. —Todd (Handstand)

#### OSCARS, THE / EVIL WIZARD EYES: *Split: 7"*

The Oscars and Evil Wizard Eyes are two very Memphis garage punk bands. The Oscars remind me of The Spits, primarily due to the vocals. Evil Wizard Eyes is on the harder edge of the Memphis scene, with occasionally screamed vocals. Both bands play wild, lo-fi, sloppy garage punk that sounds less contrived than it is. The handmade glued cover artwork kicks ass. —Art Ettinger (*Soul Is Cheap*)

#### PANGEA / HARVEST MOON SOCIETY: *Split 7"EP*

Two bands that share members, and they alternate song-by-song, not side-by-side, so it's more of a melding or a collective consciousness. Both bands are what I was hoping to hear when: A.) people say, "Influenced by the Violent Femmes" (although these two bands have made no such claims). There's this charming, quietly dissonant playfulness/seriousness threading through all four songs and the dude singer sounds more than a little like Gordon Gano. B.) What I thought The Weakerthans would sound like before I actually heard them: artful playfulness

that's punchy, without the precious "Canadian sweater, Poetry (big P), and tea"-ness that rubs me the wrong way with the aforementioned band. C.) I love swearing in folksy songs ("I ain't no goddamn Golden Arches") because that ensures it'll remain a "folk" song and not a "radio" song that'll be repackaged in fifteen years when I'm in the market for a new automobile or tube of toothpaste. Great record. Fans of The Hot New Mexicans, Nervous Dogs, Rumbleseat, and The Pine Hill Haints are predisposed to liking this, if they know it now or not. —Todd (Stress Domain)

#### PAPERMOONS: *Self-titled: 7"*

This record is like putting saran wrap on the toilet while your friends are sleeping and during the middle of the night they piss on their legs. No wait, that's not right... This record is like driving your car and running a red light without being caught. Fuck. What the hell am I trying to say? This 7" has left me utterly confused. Before I listened to it, I wasn't aware I liked droney acoustic numbers. I really expected to hate this release because I knew Papermoons was a folk band before I let the needle hit the wax and then two songs in, I actually found myself enjoying it. I guess I wouldn't be so apprehensive about it if I wasn't still getting over the "it has to be punk to be good" mindset. Forgive me, for I am young. —Bryan Static (Team Science)

#### PARTY GARBAGE: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Though I'll no doubt get hollered at,

what I'm hearing here reminds me a lot of Crimpshrine, which ain't exactly a bad thing in this case, but wasn't really expected either, given the band's from Austin. In all, it ain't my cup o' poison, but I can appreciate its charms. —Jimmy Alvarado (Super Secret)

#### PINE HILL HAINTS, THE: *Self-titled: 7"EP*

Crystalline conviction: that's what's so striking about The Pine Hill Haints. These four songs are full of restraint—almost sounding like a singer/songwriter collection, with vocals and banjo up front most of the time on the A-side—but it's not dalliance or affection. When you hear folk songs played so stridently, they're as simple and straightforward as a rocking chair. No new-fangled, bing-bong, shit-wizardry. Yeah, the songs designs are pretty simple and follow understandable arcs, but that doesn't take away from the fun and comfort they provide. Plus, true craftsmanship gets further revealed with each simple push, time and time again. Some fires burn slow without a lot of distracting flames, yet are able to heat up large spaces and are good for cooking... The Haints do just that. —Todd (Sunburst, [www.myspace.com/sunburstlabel](http://www.myspace.com/sunburstlabel))

#### PROZACS, THE & THE GUTS: *Sticking with It: Split 7"*

The Prozacs play late '90s pop punk in the possibly beloved ((by someone)) Mutant Pop style, with WHOA-OHs and YEAHs and other artifacts

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of pimply hyperbole, theoretically derivative of maybe the Teen Idols or Beatnik Termites if the listener is feeling particularly charitable that day; they shall likely neither disappoint genre devotees nor convert the heretical. Their masterpiece is the song "In Love," which consists, in its lyrical entirety, of the phrase "I'm in Love" repeatedly seemingly endlessly (which begs the question of why they couldn't have gone the whole nine yards and titled the song "I'm in Love"—oh well, i guess ya can't give 'em everything up front). If the opposite of "progress" is "congress," the opposite of "Prozacs" is obviously "Conzacs," but the band on the dark side of the vinyl appears to be called The Guts instead. Counter intuitively, The Guts have a slightly more "mature" sound than the Prozacs, which means that they can cover a song Keith Richards wrote and get away with it. "It Ain't Working out" is actually a pretty cool punk rock electro-acoustic ballad. It is difficult for me to word the phrase "if you liked the stuff on Mutant Pop Records you'll probably like this" in a particularly ingenious manner. Good night. BEST SONG: "It Ain't Working out" by The Guts, although on a better day i guess it'd be "In Love" by the Prozacs. BEST SONG TITLE: "It Ain't Working out" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The Prozacs side of this record will not play unless i press down on the label with my finger as it spins. —Rev. Nørø (Cabana)

**PULLING TEETH: Vicious Skin: 10"**  
Really, really fancy packaging; full color, foil-stamped, custom colored vinyl and a giant full color poster. Somebody sunk a lot of money into this little guy. Musically, it's heavy, thrash jock metal. I'm picturing emo hats and ear plugs and neck tattoos and expensive pants and stuff like that. I know there's a really big audience for stuff like this, but it isn't me. The poster is pretty cool, though. —Ben Snakepit (A389)

#### PUSH-PULL: 3: CDEP

Coarse, scratchy rock in the vein of Big Black. I wouldn't sell my copy of *Hammer Party* to get this, but it's decent. "Sanford Eubanks" is the best song on here. "Union Songs" is about eight minutes too long though, boys! —Sean Koepenick (Joyful Noise)

#### RAIN: La Vache Qui Rit: CD

I've made my hatred of emo no secret, but I have in recent years conceded that maybe its earliest adherents weren't exactly the pox on punk I initially thought they were, and Rain reinforces that newfound attitude. Featuring former members of Youth Brigade (DC) and Gray Matter, to name a few, this EP, originally recorded in 1987 and released in 1990, is drenched in the melding of post punk and hardcore that gave Washington DC's "Revolution Summer" group of bands that distinct sound—a mixture of Wire, Gang of Four, reggae's loping bass lines, and the off-kilter thrash of bands like Faith, —Rev. Nørø (Cabana)

Minor Threat, and Deadline. Unlike the vast bulk of millions of lesser bands that followed, however, the "punk" aspect is never lost amongst the artier aspects of what's going on, giving the music an immediacy and the necessary "edge" to vault the music past "pretentious noodling" and into the "music as catharsis" camp. I may still hate emo as much as I do cauliflower, but this is some pretty fine listenin'. —Jimmy Alvarado (Peterbilt)

#### RAZOR BOIS: Summer 2007 Demo: CD-R

Nazi-hating skinheads from Moscow. It's well-executed, fast street punk stuff from three guys who definitely don't like fascists, cops, and people in cliques. Apparently comes with a video, but I couldn't get it to play on my computer. Note to band: Guys, your six-songer was actually pretty good, but I've gotta tell you that it just doesn't carry as much weight when you rant about people being sexist and macho while simultaneously referring to them as bitches. Other than that, you're golden. —Keith Rosson (Boycott The Fencewalkers)

laden—guitars, strong tempos, and they know not to overstay their welcome. Neverending Party win this round. —Jimmy Alvarado (Thrillhouse)

#### REACTION, THE / THE NEVERENDING PARTY: Split 7" EP

The Reaction features Wade from 50 Million, an awesome band at one time, on guitar and vocals. It's a nice throwback to the old school with classic rock riffage and all the dinge and dirge of a solid basement band. Track one, "Unbelievable," has a nice Replacements feel to it, and track two, "Stitches," which features the bass player on vocals, reminds me of the Avengers. Tight for a first release. The Neverending Party features Nate from Bent Outta Shape. Solid rocking two songs here. Track one, "Can't Give You a Thing," sounds like MC5. Second track, called "Alice," is another straight up rocker. Liked both bands here, good split, but I think The Reaction are more to my liking. —Dave Disorder (Thrillhouse)

#### REAGAN SS:

#### Universal and Triumphant: LP

It takes a lot for hardcore to make the seasoned listener breathless because those of us who've been around for a bit know how the ride goes. Reagan SS knows, too, and they up the ante by literally clenching the listener and whisper-screaming directly into their ear holes. I swear, I can feel my heart constrict, my eyes bulge, my teeth grit, and my knuckles itch every time I put

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this record on... and I know what's going to happen, how it plays. Not only is Matt Average singing about an anxious world, the entire band's capturing the listener into it, netting that anxiety, controlling the space. And I have to take my hat off to the band for the long-ass track that opens up the B-side (I think it's "Primo," if I counted the tracks on the vinyl right.) It's the musical equivalent of watching bulldozers slowly level mountains of trash, and that underscores two things: 1.) Power can be short, quick jabs. It can also be built through ratcheting tension, that want of release, that slow build and instantaneous leveling in an avalanche. (Something that Fucked Up's *Hidden World* underscores.) 2.) Fuck expectations. Bands, take note. Build music for yourself, grow, and let your vision guide you, even if it's "out of bounds," even if it's far left field and "confuses the scene." In the end, you only gotta live with yourself. Great record. Highly recommended. -Todd (Rebel Sounds)

#### **RED RED RED: *Mind Destroyer*: CD**

Low-fi, fuzzed-out, garage rock. They sound like the Swing Ding Amigos, but without the weird little psychedelic flourishes... or maybe the Riverboat Gamblers without a recording budget. -Adrian Salas (Big Neck)

#### **REGRES: *W Naszych Dloniach*: CD**

Regres is a positive hardcore band from Poland that favors mainline New York hardcore styles of the '80s. The

fact that the lyrics are in Polish adds to the interest factor, and each track is a tight burst of fast energy. There are very few tempo changes or stomp around breakdowns, with the focus being on speed. The cover illustration of a kneeling, introspective kid is a neat piece of hardcore artwork, and the lyric sheet includes English translations of the lyrics. -Art Ettinger (Refuse)

#### **REPLICATOR: *Machines Will Always Let You Down*: CD**

For the sake of being totally up front with things, I have known Conan Neutron, the singer/guitarist of Replicator, for about six years now via the interweb. Now that we're past that, I can tell you what I think of this album. From Oakland, California, Replicator has a number of full-lengths and EPs out and has been around for over seven years. This release has ten songs clocking in at near thirty-seven minutes. The album was recorded by one Vern Rumsey, formerly of the band Unwound. And speaking of Unwound, there are definitely influences from them, as well as Shellac (Bob Weston recorded a previous Replicator album), Brainiac, Frodus, and a whole host of other bands. Occasionally, samples and keyboards are used. Vocals are sung and shouted from two different singers, both of whom have the amazing ability to deliver their lines with (I'm guessing) a straight face. Take, for instance, this line from "Fashionably Latent": "If I were to travel back in time, fashion

would be a main concern of mine." Or, from the same song: "It's like a Surrealist painting; the kind with a giant penis serving tea to dainty old ladies." Using that sense of humor, the band seems to primarily focus on technology, hence the title, although other subjects are covered as well, including not giving up, being owned, and King Shit of Fuck Mountain. The energy and sense of fun from their live show (which is quite good, I might add) definitely comes across on the recording, which is a rare thing to find. The technological focus of the band serves to match up well with the style they play. It's as though, in my mind, I can picture an alternate reality where the members of Replicator are the last human beings left on an earth that has become ruled by cyborgs. This may be the music that could start the revolution. I guess we can't say we weren't warned. -Kurt Morris (Radio Is Down)

#### **REVISIONS, THE: *On the Lam*: 7"EP**

This isn't a slam. Ever wondered what The Observers would have sounded like if they were formed by Simon and Garfunkel? The Revisions provide that answer. Led by Doug Burns, the singer and one (?) of the songwriters for The Observers—the voice is familiar, so are the structures of the songs—but instead of Molotovs of sound trying to light up ghettos, it's more cocktails of sophistication. (Maybe a better analogue would TV Smith's solo acoustic work, verses

what he did with The Adverts). Wire brush drumming, intricately textured strumming, acoustic guitar, piano: it's taking a little bit of getting used to. You know, you associate a voice with a certain expectation if you've listened to it in one way for so long. But there's no doubt Doug can write the hell out of a song. I'll probably return to this at the end of long days, when I want to wind down. -Todd (Green Noise)

#### **RIOT/CLONE: *Success*: CD**

Dunno who's doin' the pickin' over at Dr. Strange, but they've got one hell of a batting average going. For those not in the know, Riot/Clone is one of the early U.K. bands associated with the anarcho-punk scene that spawned Crass, Discharge, Flux of Pink Indians, Conflict, and tons of others. They've released a number of singles and albums over nearly three decades and this latest is a doozy. Losing none of the anger, passion, and "punk" of their early years, they dish up seventeen tracks (one more listed, "The Wit & Wisdom of George W. Bush," consists of a long bit of silence) of fierce, uncompromising, and catchy punk rock devoid of both the clichéd conventions too many modern "peace punk" bands rely upon and the stodgy lack of enthusiasm that plagues a number of their reformed peers. The music is strong, the lyrics topical, and the delivery vital, making this one of the most consistently good releases of the year. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

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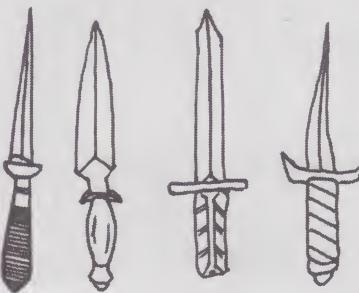
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**RIOT/CLONE: Success: CD**

If I hadn't plowed through the fat lyric booklet that came with this thing, I'd swear I was listening to something that could've come out on Bluurg, Crass, or Spiderleg twenty-five years ago. And that's not a bad thing at all. Think anemic, snotty British punk that could've wound up on any a *Punk and Disorderly* comp with nary a furrowed brow. After listening to this thing quite a few times and reading what they have to say, I found myself liking this band more and more. The lyrics are smart and topical and do a great job of toeing the line between sincerity, sarcasm, and self-effacement. All the songs include explanations, and the band comes across as just being humble, genuine guys. And if some of the songs have a tendency to extend themselves a bit too long, it's fine; they're keeping it punk and shit, and refusing to grapple with gross-ass metal-fusion wankery that many long-time bands have a tendency to start meddling with. They've been together since 1980 and *Success* is their swan song—the band's calling it a day. It's a pretty goddamn rad epitaph—music that wholeheartedly embraces their roots, their foundation, while lyrically keeping things current without skimping on any of the anger or content. Nice job all around. —Keith Rosson (Dr. Strange)

**RIPTIDES, THE: Hang Out: CD**

I really like this CD. Clever lyrics, cool back-up vocals without all the

overkill some other bands employ, and just catchy songs overall. "Bonehead" sports a fantastic opening verse: "with your blood red cocaine nosejob/and a big fat check from your Mom/whatever, whenever/your life, I'll just watch it from the stands/my little backseat bombshell." They guys are from Canada, but even if they weren't, I bet they all party harder than the guys in Rush. —Sean Koepenick (Red Scare)

**RISING UP RISING DOWN:  
Monster Crusher: LP**

Took me a few listens to get into this one, but after a couple plays I'm starting to get a handle on their particular vision, and, yeah, it's a monster crusher indeed. This shit is brutal, sir. Discordant and angular, but rounded and fattened out by a thick guitar sound (another Dead Air Studios job), full of odd time signatures and crazy stops and starts without the least bit of pretension or hair-flicking sass. They're painting one hell of a bleak picture here (lyrically, you can use Tragedy's "the world is a bright and wonderful place" template to give you an idea of the rainbow-colored pos-vibes shooting off of this one) and, musically, it's like a pitch-perfect blend of Hellnation's relentlessness and the battery-on-the-tongue minor-chord grimace of Swing Kids. I think it leans more heavily towards crust and d-beat than it does tight pants and hair products that people generally associate with screamo nowadays, but

Rising Up Rising Down's striking me as a good enough band to give fans of either genre the piss shivers. Nice work. —Keith Rosson (Maple Leaf)

**ROBOCOP 3: If The Door Is Locked,  
There Is Someone In There: 7"**

Skipped versions 1 and 2 and went straight to 3. Gotta wonder what's so special about the third installment of *Robocop* that it makes you want to name your band after the film. My problem with *Robocop* is that he's no longer a man, but he's not all robot, either. He's more of a hybrid of the two, which makes him a cyborg, and not a *Robocop*. The movie, *Cyborg*, was a Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle. They never made a sequel to that opus. Although, in my opinion, they should have because Vincent Klyn, also known as Lupton "Warchild" Pittman from *Point Break*, starred as Van Damme's nemesis. It's a quality film. But aside from the name of the band, they are also lyrical messiahs with songs about Muppet movie characters, pool parties, and unicorn card decks that posses magic powers. How can you go wrong? —Dave Disorder (Thrillhouse)

**ROCK, STAR: Inamorato: CD**

*Inamorato* is a lost album recorded seven years ago, but never released. The story of Rock, Star is a fairly common one. They existed as an active band for a few years, gained a ton of fans, and then faded into obscurity before a recent reformation.

They play a brand of melodic punk that was common in the late '90s when melodic bands took precautions to not sound like the pop punk that was, at that time, experiencing a huge backlash. This terrific album reminds me a bit of Naked Raygun. I'd like to hear more material from Rock, Star now that they're back in action. —Art Ettinger (Black Numbers)

**SAD TROPICS: Everything Was  
Beautiful and Nothing Hurt: CDEP**

Full disclosure: The drummer of this band got me into punk rock, the singer/guitarist's former mother-in-law was my eighth grade science teacher, and the bass player will, to me, forever be twelve years old. That being said, this is the Indiana-based band's first release. It's a six song EP, with one of those songs being a bonus track (a cover of a song by the singer's solo act, The Rutabega). The band is a three piece with the bassist also doing some background vocals. Although the band states their influences range from Minor Threat to Redd Kross and the Flaming Lips, it's much easier to hear the Flaming Lips than the other bands. This is total pop with a lemony twist of intelligence (take that, generic emo band of the month!) with much of the album focused more on ideal songwriting and less on energy and punk-inspired mass mayhem. Thus, the clean recording and engineering really emphasizes the band's music. Having known the band members' previous acts—singer-songwriter, math rock, atmospheric

altera-rock—Sad Tropics seems like the logical next step in the musical lives of these individuals. The sound may be too unsoiled for most readers of this zine, but the hooks and catchiness of the choruses really shouldn't be lost on any fan of the poppier side of punk. —Kurt Morris (Self-released, Sad Tropics, [www.myspace.com/sadtropics](http://www.myspace.com/sadtropics))

#### **SAHN MARU: Never Too Late: CD**

If I remember correctly, this band has a former member of Blown To Bits. Looking at the provided info, that fact is correct. It was over a year ago that I saw this Bay Area band. I was impressed with their take on Swedish d-beat. The set was very aggressive and heavy. I was truly impressed. I never got around to getting their 7", but here lays before me their full length. As mentioned before, the band plays d-beat, Discore, or whatever you want to call it. But they also add the metallic elements of crust in their music, which gives it a dreary, dark feeling, adding to the power. An added plus is that it sounds like it was recorded in a decent studio. Everything seems to be in the right place and the instruments are clear and loud. Nothing is worse for me these days than listening to something recorded on the cheap and not sounding even half good. But when recorded properly, the music stands out and keeps my attention. Attention I have, as I have listened to this numerous times. Something about the brash vocals, heavy, distorted guitars, and solid and punchy-sounding drums and bass gets

my adrenaline pumping. Adding the metal riffing makes my head bang with appreciation. You either do this genre wrong or right. This band has done it right. —Donofthedead (Inimical)

#### **SAYYADINA:**

##### **Mourning the Unknown: CD**

No bullshit, straight kick-in-the-teeth thrash/grindcore. These Swedes pull a no-holds-barred approach to their music. Songs that are so intense with venom that there is no mistaking the anger, all mostly under the two minute mark. If the songs were too long, the attention span would definitely be depleted. Wailing, screamed vocals that probably can blow holes through walls. Masterful, distorted guitar attack that can take you heading banging one minute and thrashing about in another. Drumming that is precise but pounding in speeds that, at times, seem humanly impossible. Bass guitar playing that ties everything together and adds that eerie tone of evil. Not for the weak at heart or someone who is looking for melody. This is music for people who are pissed. —Donofthedead (Sound Pollution)

#### **SMILE BRIGADE, THE: Take This Precious Edge off This Treacherous Ledge: CD**

This band lives just over in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, a few miles from where I reside. I've never heard of them until now and they remind me of this obscure band from Atlanta back in the '90s called Loudflower. Except Loudflower had

horns, but weren't ska, and were actually pretty good. The Smile Brigade is not. It's fairly generic-sounding coffee house rock music with cheesy backing vocals and nothing exciting to offer. Next time we do the reviews, Todd, I want some of the faster, harder shit, not this wimpy, boring crap. —Kurt Morris (Tilton House)

#### **SODA POP KIDS:**

##### **Teen Bop Dream: CD**

I confess: I'm prejudiced against dudes with long, layered haircuts. They probably want to look like Ron Wood or Mick Ronson or some other early '70s rock icon, but in choosing such a coif they remind me of Rod Stewart. That's not good for the digestion. But holy hot damn, friends, *Teen Bop Dream* calls for us to rise above such thinking, clear away the cobwebs of narrow-mindedness. The Soda Pop Kids look like goofs but the first four cuts on *Teen Bop Dream* scorch along like those early Bobbyteens songs when Karen Supercharger was in the band: bubblegum garage punk with a kitschy, "let's embrace and update the sounds of the '70s" attitude. (Speaking of mental outlook, the Soda Pop Kids radiate an irreverence that, in a perfect world, would lead to their own Saturday morning cartoon show.) There are also shades of the Exploding Hearts, Nice Boys, and Donny Denim. Then the band brings the room down, in terms of energy, not mood, with a couple of slow-burning ballads and,

on the second-to-last cut, a country tune. I wanted more of the barnburning early songs, but the twists and turns provide unexpected contrasts and lead to a really good record. And if using hairspray helped the Soda Pop Kids in any way, I'll reconsider my stance on aerosol styling products. —Mike Faloon (Full Breach)

#### **STATIC RADIO:**

##### **One For The Good Guys: CDEP**

I still think this is super fast, Kid Dynamite-inspired hardcore (see issue #38). The CD version of this has two more B-side type songs than the 7", yet it is still one sided.—Joe Evans III (Black Numbers)

#### **STEINWAYS, THE / PEABODYS, THE: Irreconcilable Differences: Split 7"**

The Steinways: They're starting to gain some momentum in the pop punk world, but it's almost like they're a parody of the genre in question. Either way, their style of pop punk by the book may get a little stale at times, but they have the humor and energy to pull it off. The Peabodys: I had never heard of this band before this release, but they seem appropriate to hold the B-side. I won't say they're metaphorical twins to The Steinways because they're not, but there are enough similarities to make you think twice about it. Each band does four songs and the last one on each side is acoustic. This record will definitely be getting more spins. —Bryan Static (Incessant Drip)



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**STREET TRASH:  
Into the Wasteland: LP**

There's something, well, soothing, about torn-denim, puking skulls, penis-head and chainsaw thrash. I'm not saying that Street Trash is the second coming of The Care Bears or anything, but there's something real fuckin' nice about a dysfunctional band (who've broken up and gotten back together, members left, drama) putting together a record that flat-out rages from start to finish. It's like a blankie of hate and pestilence you can wrap around your shoulders when it gets cold outside. There are quite a few flashes of "shit yeah"ness in *Into the Wasteland*, and they're along the lines of what Government Warning's cranking out. Solid. —Todd (No Class)

**SUBWAY SECT: 1978 Now: CD**

Contrary to what happened later, there was once a time when punk was more about how you approached music than what you played. Just take a listen to Wire, The Ramones, Billy Bragg, The Slits, Television, and the Weirdos one after the other and you'll see what I mean. One of the odder, more interesting bands to come out of the first wave of English bands was Subway Sect. Led by Vic Godard, the band's lack of full-on distorted guitars and arty take on pop music stood in stark contrast to the hullabaloo of bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash (the latter of which they shared a manager, Bernie Rhodes), but their output was just as vital and edgy as anything their more popular peers produced. Although the original

lineup managed a single, Rhodes sacked the bulk of the lineup while the band was in the midst of recording its debut album, and all but the song "Ambition," which proved to be a popular single, was lost to time (although rough mixes have apparently been bootlegged over the years). Some thirty years later, Godard and most of that original lineup have decided to rectify that situation by going into the studio and re-recording the album. Given the length of time that has passed, the result is surprisingly good, with the songs and the performance both retaining the necessary vigor to give it that needed punk edge, and the quirkiness of the songwriting keeps them sounding very much "ahead of their time," even thirty years down the line. While those who think punk is solely about Black Flag, Ramones, Rancid, and any band that sounds like them, will no doubt be sorely disappointed, those with a broader understanding of punk's role as wrecker of the status quo will find this to be one of the genre's most important releases. —Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

**TEENERS, THE: Self-titled: 7" EP**

Dude, is this some sorta long lost Reatards EP? —Jimmy Alvarado (Super Secret)

**THROTTLE: Discharge: CD**

They're supposedly influenced by '70s and early '80s punk, but a lot of what I'm hearing sounds very much like they've enjoyed much of the up-tempo moments of Nirvana's back catalog. This doesn't make what they're doing

lousy, 'cause they're actually quite a good band, but either my hearing is all wonky right now (and it wouldn't be the first time) or they've got more influences going than they're letting on. —Jimmy Alvarado (Collision Course)

**TOO MANY DAVES: Self-titled: 7" EP**

Party, fuckin' party. Wooooo! This party, you're invited to. All five dudes have Dave in their name (first or last), and it's so friendly that if the technology existed, the record itself would be opening up your beer and lighting your bong as it spins on the turntable. It's also the equivalent to your friends who dress up in 12-pack cartons after they've been emptied and wave to neighbors while they're pissing on their lawns. It's more than a record; it's a blueprint to these dudes' lives. Recommended. —Todd (ADD)

**TOTAL ABUSE: Sex Pig: 7" EP**

Holy shit, I wasn't expecting this. Thought it was gonna be some weirdo art punk or something but what I got was über-raw, spastic hardcore that sounds like very early SS Decontrol with a much lower recording budget. Totally worth a listen. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

**TULSA: Sour Digs: LP + CD**

There's a difference between forms and formulas. Tulsa oozes the tradition of East Bay pop punk: handwritten lyric sheets, songs about cheap alcohol, love's trapdoors, friends dying too soon, all slid in great silk screened cover (along with a CD), all conceptually held

together with duct tape. You know; the current hallmarks to a tried and true DIY punk release. And you know what? It still rules after you kinda know what you're gonna get. Give me songs about failure and still willing to bite back. Give me Shotwell, the almost-breathlessness of This Is My Fist, the worn-rug pop charm of The Bananas, that huddling up in a weird poncho of the Abi Yo Yos. *Sour Digs* feels like a family affair; a nationwide family of bands, a family you're invited to join, just by listening along to this record. Shit like this just makes me smile. —Todd (Starcleaner, www.starcleaner.com)

**TUNNEL, THE: Self-titled: CDEP**

Sounds like Jon Spencer Blues Explosion backing a theatrically constipated Jack White. —Jessica T (Self-released)

**TURBO A.C.'s: Live to Win: CD**

Exactly what you've come to expect from the Turbo A.C.'s. Loud, fast, and out of control. —Jessica T (Acetate)

**UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANDYLAND, THE: Bird Roughs: CD**

I always hold my tongue when I first get a piece of music that Todd Congelliere is involved with. Todd, most widely known for Toys That Kill and FYP, has this ability to constantly stay one step ahead of me musically. It took me awhile to warm up to all three TTK albums, but now they contain some of my favorite music of all time. I always feel like a knob talking about "songwriters"—because the first

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person to always flash into my mind is John Denver, smiling like a fool behind a guitar on his lap—but URTC sounds like a quieter permutation of TTK. (There are TTK fingerprints all over URTC due to Todd's voice and the four-armed drummer Jimmy Trash behind the kit). I made this mistake last issue, insinuating that Dan Padilla was a "side project" of Tiltwheel—since the second band started after the other, yet contained overlapping members—so I'll avoid that pitfall in this review. Introduced into the fold are Jack Blast (a super nice Pedro stalwart), and Jack Doyle (another Pedro fixture for many years, and a grade school teacher. I think this is his first band). The other result with URTC is that *Bird Roughs* is mainly subdued, letting the textures of songs come to the forefront; from surf guitar to the Cure-reminiscent jangling. As a matter of fact, throw in mid-and-late '80s Euro bands that had good ideas although I can't say I celebrate their entire catalogs—Echo And The Bunnymen, The Church, Adam Ant—and huck 'em in the San Pedro DIY punk perversity blender, and there you go. *Bird Roughs* is a weird, but comfortingly so, record that's kinda what you'd expect from the folks involved, but not exactly. And that's what keeps me interested. —Todd (Recess)

#### VAPIDS, THE: *The Point Remains the Same*: CD

Played with these intrepid sons of Hamilton, Ontario something like

ten years ago in Minnesota; i had to stop and think for a while to confirm it wasn't the Dinks, from Thunder Bay, i was thinking of ((result: I think we played with both the Vapids AND the Dinks at that show)), which seems fraught with commentary on either my age, my memory, or the fact that any combination of four dudes from Ontario with black leather jackets is roughly equivalent to any other combination of four dudes from Ontario with black leather jackets. Maybe all three. Well, whatever. As far as i can tell, the Vapids are the last legit survivors of the whole '90s Ramones-core ("Riverdales-core?") phenomenon, except for Head, who seem like a "special" case ((if you know what i mean)), which pleases me in the same way that i've always enjoyed that episode of *Gilligan's Island* with the Japanese sailor who doesn't know that World War II is over. The odd thing about the Vapids is that, whereas most Ramones-core is built around a simple, cartoonish, catchy chorus, most Vapid-toons eschew this tried'n'true method and go more the route of the New Bomb Turks or Action Swingers, limiting the use of particularly distinct choruses, and often giving the actual title of the song little or no lyrical presence in the body of the lyrics itself—making the music more about drive than hooks, i'd reckon. Granted, you could spend a much worse 24.2 minutes than listening to the album's fifteen tracks, but one might speculate that one of

the reasons why this band hasn't really connected on a continent-wide level is that they've been using the wrong tool for the wrong job—trying to use a Ramones hammer to drive home a New Bomb Turks nail, or some god damn thing. I once passed up the chance to buy Ben Weasel's Mosrite™ from him for \$600, and have always wondered if i made the wrong choice in that regard. Listening to the Vapids in 2007, i remain as confused as ever. BEST SONG: "Got Me on a Leash" BEST SONG TITLE: "Nowhere Man" if you're the Beatles or the Anti-Nowhere League; "Human Zoo" if you're Sham 69. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The song title "9.18. Ft. Lee VA 1952" is actually in reference to Dee Dee Ramone's birthday. Amazingly, that is also the day that the Beatles recorded the song "Birthday." It's also my girlfriend's son's birthday, my brother's wedding anniversary, and the anniversary of Jimi Hendrix's death. Zany! —Rev. Nørø (Independent Punk Rock)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS: *New York vs. New Jersey-Punk Rock Battle Royale!*: CD

Oh, fate's cruel punches come crashing down on this mere mortal reviewer. Having seen a handful of these bands at Insubordination Fest, this is a tough call. But I shall carry on! Round one: The Ergs! Vs Lemuria. Winner: The Ergs! Round two: Hunchback vs. The Unlovelies. Winner: The Unlovelies. Round three: Groucho Marxists vs. Nancy. Winner: Groucho Marxists.

Round four: For Science vs. The Steinways. Winner: For Science. Final score: New Jersey-3, New York-1. This was decreed a TKO by Jimmy "Mouth of the South" Hart and can't be disputed. Put on this CD and enjoy with a WWF Superstars of Wrestling Ice Cream Bar and you'll be happier than a pig in shit! (Why anyone, including a pig, would be happy in this situation is beyond me.) —Sean Koepenick (Crafty)

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Taking out a Little Aggression—A Tribute*: CD

Anyone thinking about releasing a tribute CD should be required to listen to *Taking out a Little Aggression*. Aggression was a hardcore, skate punk band from Oxnard, California, who, along with Ill Repute, Shattered Faith, and Battalion of Saints, helped create the Nardcore punk scene in Southern California. Two of Aggression's members, Henry Knowles and Mark Hickey, died in 2000 and 2002, respectively. These songs were recorded over three years by friends of the band and compiled for this CD as a tribute to Knowles and Hickey, and a benefit for those they left behind. JFA, D.I., MDC, Channel 3, and Oppressed Logic all contribute fantastic versions of Aggression songs and the resulting compilation is truly amazing. These guys took what must have been an incredibly difficult time in their lives—the loss of two friends—and turned it into something beautiful. Huge thanks to Dave Haro,

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JellyRoll, and Dr. Strange Records for putting this out. —Josh Benke (Dr. Strange)

**VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Taking out a Little Aggression—A Tribute*: CD**

Dave Haro is a great guy, and apparently a bit of a whiz at picking out the right bands to make what is normally a tedious exercise in ego-fellating—the now-dreaded “tribute” album—into a more than worthwhile listen. Expanding on an idea that came after his homeboy (and Aggression guitarist) Henry Knowles died in 2002, Haro and cohort Jellyroll enlisted the aid of some of best bands in American punk rock’s storied history—MDC, Shattered Faith, Channel 3, Verbal Abuse, Fang, Life Crisis, Retching Red, DI, Kat Killer, fellow skatepunk bands JFA and McRad, and tons more—to run through assorted Aggression tunes in tribute to Knowles and singer Mark Hickey, who died in 2000. The result is a surprisingly solid, varied take on the band’s impressive catalog, with MDC providing the most unconventional (an acoustic version of “It Can Happen”) and the punk supergroup S.A.I.D. (featuring members of Stalag 13, Aggression, Ill Repute, and Dr. Know, hence the name) dishing out the thrashiest with their cover of “Stop the Clock.” In all, this set is easily the best tribute compilation of the year, if not the decade. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

**VATICANS, THE: *Guardia Svizzera Pontifica: CD***

Those expecting some sorta continuation of the loud, trashy legacy of the Fingers, Rip Offs, Infections, et al., are going to be sorely disappointed, ‘cause, sonically, this is in a whole other ballpark. While still spare in instrumentation, and occasional flashes of that raucous legacy sometimes pop up, the bulk of this is geared solely toward the pop side of the fence, with clean channel guitars, mid-tempo rhythms and female vocals more Penelope Houston than Alice Bag. Those who appreciate substance over style, however, will find much to like here. The tunes are well crafted and very catchy, knowing yet tempered with a subtlety and grace not usually expected from a buncha punks. Looks like Shane finally hit on the right combination of collaborators to realize his dream of creating a pure pop band a la the Raspberries. Kudos to ye, mate, ‘cause it’s a fuggin’ great band. Considering I made my bones as a *Pure Filth* staffer, which means I learned to calls ‘em as I see ‘em without mincing words, lord knows I don’t throw praise around like that lightly, no matter who it is. —Jimmy Alvarado (*Pure Filth*)

**VIOLENT MINDS: *Just Kicked In: 7"*  
VIOLENT MINDS: *We Are Nothing: CD***

This band is the equivalent of someone you can’t win an argument with. They won’t let you talk and they’re being ten times louder than you can. During the

whole debacle, you might be annoyed, but once it ends—it may be ten minutes or ten days later—but you eventually come to the realization that they were actually right. And you are totally dumb-shit wrong. Violent Minds plays Motörhead meets Negative Approach with a thirst for blood and drugs. This band is a black cloud spewing raining acid onto a Christian youth picnic; it’s so goddamn beautiful. Pummeling, distorted vocals, USHC. The CD contains songs from their *We Are Nothing* LP plus the four songs on the *Just Kicked In 7"*. —Daryl (Deranged)

**WATCH IT BURN!: *How America Motherfucking Works: 12"***

Here’s what I don’t know: who the hell this band is. There’s the Watch It Burn that did a split with Altaira a few years back. They were from Portland and sounded like a rough-hewn Broadway Calls. Then wasn’t there a band on Chunksaah with the same name? Then there’s these guys—there’s virtually no information accompanying this record, except for the fact that the label’s from Wisconsin and the songs were recorded in October of 1998. Watch It Burn!: men of mystery. Here’s what I do know: they’re playing some mean and ugly hardcore laced with feedback and propped up by a ton of tempo changes in every song. They kind of sound like that Swedish band Last Match, and have the same propensity for dragging things out a

tad longer than they need to. When they keep things fast and lock into a groove, it’s good stuff, but too much of is played sloooow, in an attempt to sound punishing (see “Ground Hemlock Lake,” which takes up the majority of the B side.) Instead, it just allows my mind to wander elsewhere. No lyrics whatsoever (though they do have a song called “Earthday Crisis”) and limited to 300. Lastly, the label must be giving the post office a spiritual hard-on with this one: the sleeve itself weighs more than most double LPs. —Keith Rossen (Finger On The Dutendoo)

**WHITE LUNG: *Local Garbage: 7" EP***

These Canadian ladies know exactly what they’re doing: taking all that great proto-wave, punk-before-mass-herding, punk-before-“disco ain’t so bad!”, before-the-fall tracks of Wire (*Pink Flag*), Gang Of Four (*Entertainment!*), and The Avengers (Self-titled), picked up a Kathleen Hannah cabinet and microphone along the way (circa *Reject All American*), leapt over the last decade while steering clear of any pop punk or rock’n’roll, and reconfigured the pieces to an old jigsaw with no missing pieces. That’s much harder than it sounds, and I’m enjoying this 7” quite a bit. Nice surprise. (And if you haven’t heard the albums in parenthesis in this review, all are highly recommended listening.) —Todd (Hockey Dad)



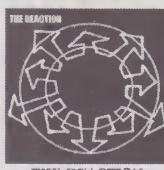
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**WIDDERS, THE: Down for Life: CD**

The press release threw some dubious factoids my way. First, the drummer is "professional skateboarding legend" Tom Knox. I only know of Tony Hawk, so I will have to take their word for it. Then, to describe the record, they throw in this choice nugget: "Imagine if Motörhead played with an upright bass. Yeah, it's that gnarly!" Red flag! Lemmy may drive a white minivan, but he would never, ever play a stand-up bass. You can take that to the bank and cash it! Case closed. —Sean Koepenick (Fallen Angel)

**WITCHES WITH DICKS: Manual: CD**

Great record. Witches With Dicks have a very familiar sound, but at no point do they sound stale. In fact, they take a familiar formula and transfer it into something out of this world, like somebody's secret chili recipe that just knocks your socks off—all the usual components are there, but somehow Witches With Dicks' stew achieves zesty magnificence where others taste like the same old shit. This is ten tracks of raw and inventive rock'n'roll that never failed to nail me to the wall, and the vocal harmonies are the screaming end. And the drummer is not just a 4/4-time boom-tap-boom-tap drummer; like the great Ringo Starr, this guy plays the drums not only as a means of providing tempo, but as a means of accentuating the sound through counterpoint while

filling out the job begun by the vocals and guitars. This is a full package: an inspired rhythm section, a rugged and desperate guitar sound, well-placed and well-laced organs, and vocal harmonies swirling like a barbed double helix of DNA. All I know is that *Manual* rocks and rocks and rocks and you'd be a fool not to try this chili, at the very least. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Kiss of Death)

**WORM QUARTET: Mental Notes: CD**

Goofy in substance, techno/synth in style (they called it "industrial" music when I was in college, but I think the labels have changed—live, aggressive guitars, over-the-top keyboards, manic, programmed drums), Worm Quartet is a one-man band that straps spork references to drum machines. It's either They Might Be Giants backed by Ministry or Weird Al recording for Wax Trax. With a Boris The Sprinkler cover ("Drugs and Masturbation") to boot. The live track, "What Your Parents Think All Your Music Sounds Like," shows that Tim "Shoebox" Crist is a funny guy who can work a crowd, but the balance of *Mental Notes* is more clever than enjoyable. —Mike Faloon (Worm Quartet)

**YOLKS, THE:****Introducing the Yolks: 7" EP**

You think that I cannot consummate the review of this record without lowering myself to making at least one completely telegraphed pun

involving the band's name, don't you? Well, HA! In the immortal words of the Fastbacks, you are WRONG, WRONG, WRONG. I am a LEGITIMATE ROCK CRITIC, dammit, and I will not pander to your cretinistic lowbrowisms by engaging in spurts of tawdry egg humor! A pox upon all your houses! In any event, I like this band! They seem like the kind of band that would not at all be ashamed to admit that the Fleshtones are like, one of the greatest live bands, like, EVER, even though Peter Zaremba hosted a show on MTV like twenty-five years ago or whatever. The Yolks' modified tin can production ethos hearkens back to the glorious heyday of "lo-fi"—back before someone or another wrecked it ((I don't remember who wrecked it. Probably those same jerks who trashed your tree fort?)), falling somewhere between the Estrusish stuff like the Invisible Men or Statics ((wait, there's a difference?)) and the more brain-damaged-dance-party aesthetic of Radio X offerings like the Brentwoods or Bobbyteens, except that, at heart, these songs are a little more standardish '60s maraca-Pebble excursions, not involving Dancing the Bug or things of this nature ((although Dancing the Bug is, at root, quite a worthy endeavor)). Actually, while "I Found Love" sounds like the Earth-3 version of the Syndicate of Sound ((in this parallel world, the Syndicate

of Sound are not super-villains, but actually rescue cats from trees and things of this nature)) and "My Baby Ain't High Class" sounds more or less like a no-fi Cynics or something, I feel the true spirit of the band is tidily encapsulated in "I Do What I Do"—an almost Richman-like paean of Pop-Nerd Pride, or such are my perceptions. And if I'm wrong, well—yolk's on me. Ooops. BEST SONG: "I Do What I Do" BEST SONG TITLE: "My Baby Ain't High Class" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I drive a yellow Pontiac Sunfire and my license plate reads "BADYOLK." —Rev. Nørb (Yolks)

**YOUTHS, THE: We're the Youths: 7"**

I hate lyrics on the back cover of a record, especially when the first word is misspelled. But, anyway, it's catchy, lo-fi garage punk. They put their myspace address on the record, too, in case you're too dumb to search for them. I wish I had more to say about this record, but they don't give me much. Sorry. —Ben Snakepit (Criminal IQ)

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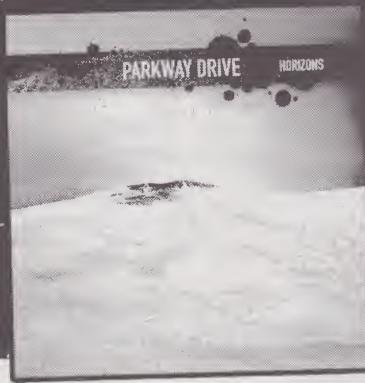
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## BEAT SHEET Vol. 5.5,

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Local one-sheeter on the Boston hardcore scene. A bit of a tour diary here and some reviews. Inspired as fuck. Doesn't care what you think. Your scene needs this guy and not you. You jaded, ironic fuck. —Craven Rock (Beat Sheet, 6 Wadleigh Place, Boston, MA 02127-2728)

## BODY COUNT #2, \$2.50/trade, $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ , photocopied, 44 pgs.

Despite the fact that we've supposedly topped out the format of the "travel zine" collectively and culturally—I guess I'll grudgingly admit that *Cometbus* wins out as far as writing goes, with *In Abandon* probably taking the cake for visuals and aesthetics—I still like reading them. I still like the format. So when I get a zine like *Body Count*, where some of the writing goes off the page margins and nothing really *that* exciting happens to the guy, I'm still into it. There's something really comforting and nice about reading about other people's Greyhound nightmares and visits to hostels and strange-city bars. The writing doesn't delve much beyond the scope of "I went here and did this," but there are some glimmers here and there. If this dude decides to do another issue and tries his hand at a tighter presentation and some fearless editing, we could have a winner. —Keith Rosson (Body Count, 3608 28<sup>th</sup> St. SE, Calgary AB, T2B 2H9, Canada)

## CLENCH #9, 2 stamps, $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$ , photocopied, 20 pgs.

Great concept for a zine: take a "long-lost" hardcore record and just explore the fuck out of it. Find the band members. Interview them. Fill yourself in on the band and record's contextual history: time period, locale, social/political environment. Find people who knew and hung out with the band. Interview them. Write extensively and lovingly about the record itself. It's a terrific idea, and the editor's passion is mostly what carries this issue along. The record

in question is NYHC pioneers Urban Waste's only 7", and within the first page it becomes very obvious that Phil just loves the shit out of '80s New York hardcore in general and this record specifically. There are multiple interviews (band members, zine editors that hung out with the band, the guy from Mad At The World who recently—and legitimately—released the 7" as a 12"), reviews of the original record and, again, Phil's passionate writing. I mean, maybe Todd frickin' Taylor could go on for four pages or more, song by song, about a particular record that he likes; I don't know if I could do it. So, if the photos are generally pretty cruddy and the layout's a little dull, it doesn't matter too much—the joy really shines through here. Next issue's apparently gonna cover the Zero Boys. —Keith Rosson (Phil Knowles, 240 Spring Hill Dr. #240, Roselle, IL 60172-2470)

## DOROTHEA #1, \$1, $4'' \times 5''$ , photocopied, 8 pgs.

Mike has written a nice, compact zine of nice, compact stories, none more than a few hundred words. Some might think that is too short of time to create something of interest or to get the reader involved. However, somehow he pulls it all together. These stories were all written after Mike's mom died, but the vast majority have nothing to do with that topic. Mike also wishes to inform us (as he does both in the opening and closing notes) that he is a liar and you can't trust anything he says. So who knows if some of these stories really happened; it's obvious some didn't, but it really doesn't matter. While capable of pulling out some emotions from the reader here or there, it's also a quick read and a fun zine. —Kurt Morris (5666 Split Oak Ln., Tallahassee, FL 32303)

## EAR DAMAGE #18, \$2, Glossy, $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ , 40 pgs.

Insightful sleaze-punk that's nice and low on the creep-o-meter. Email interviews with Blag from The

Dwarves, The River City Tanlines, and alt-porn Director Vena Virago; the editor's personal history of how he became a porn fan (his uncle used to leave copies of *Hustler* laying around); and an article drawing parallels between the materialism of popular gangsta rap and the financial and social conservatism of the Republican party. *Ear Damage* is not the second coming of *The Probe*, but it's sure as hell a worthy read if "punks who are openly into porn" is not an oxymoron to you. —CT Terry (Cheetah Shine, PO Box 582, Eight Mile, AL 36663)

## EXIT 63 BLUES #6 & #7, \$1, $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8''$ , photocopied, 16-20 pgs.

This zine is all lists of what the author did every day for weeks on end. Both issues are like that; just three or five or eight things. And while that may sound interesting, it's not really when you do the same thing almost every day. I learned that the author works a lot and really likes baseball as well as music. He also does most of the stuff the rest of us do. And I don't know about you, but most peoples' lives aren't all that exciting. Neither is the author's. —Kurt Morris (6466 VT RT 125, Vergennes, VT 05491)

## HERE IT IS #3, $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}''$ , photocopied, 40 pgs.

I really liked this. Cartoons about the days that make up one's life. Some inventive stuff, too (the new religion of Asu Bebee). This has no sentimentality and no moralizing, no opinions; its whole point is to spin little tales about seemingly pointless moments in life. The idea being, as I take it, that in these pointless moments we discover what the point of living is. Reminded me a lot of *Jim's Journal*, a comic strip from the early '90s. Here's how it would go... two panels about trying a new burger joint, the third providing the point: "It was okay." *Here It Is* has that same feel to it. Nice. —The Lord Kveldulfur (PO Box 7023, Richmond, VA 23231; hellomermaid.com)

**"DO NOT:  
Bother writing  
what college  
degrees someone  
holds under their  
names."**

—Lauren Trout  
Hullabaloo #1

## HULLABALOO #1, \$3 U.S., \$3.50 Canada, $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ , photocopied, 14 pgs.

Hi there, first-time zinester, my name is Lauren, and today, I'll be offering you some constructive criticism regarding how to make a DIY-themed zine. Sit back, don't take it too personally, and enjoy the ride.

1. DO: Read *Stolen Sharpie Revolution* cover to cover.
2. DO: Look up other DIY zines and find out which topics have already been covered to death.
3. DO: Include bylines or at least your name somewhere in the zine.
4. DO NOT: Publish poetry.
5. DO NOT: Bother writing what college degrees someone holds under their names. (College degrees don't prove shit, and the whole point of DIY is that anyone can teach everyone!)
6. DO NOT: Have a Q & A section where you write both the questions and the answers about why you wanted to make a zine. (If it's good, those answers will be self evident!)
7. DO NOT: Use large text or leave three-fourths of a page blank. (You could focus on putting all your effort into making a few really good pages!)
8. DO NOT: Leave two pages blank for the reader "practice making their own zine." (It should be obvious that the reader is capable of folding a sheet of paper in half!)

Well, there you have it. I hope you find my suggestions useful, or at least that they prepared you for the eternal criticism that every writer faces. Please send along the next issue of your zine, so I might see how you have improved with or without following the above advice. If you have any questions, please email me at laurendzs@hotmail.com. Thank you and please step outside the boundaries of what feels safe. —Lauren Trout (1206 Taylor Ave N #103, Seattle, WA 98109)

**INFECTICITIS #5, \$2  
or stamps or trade,  
 $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 8\frac{1}{2}''$ , photocopied, 44 pgs.**  
Remember feeling really excited, totally out of place, completely

invincible, and absolutely homesick the first time you traveled on your own far away from your hometown? Read about Halley, punk rock adventurer, leaving Massachusetts to attend a semester of art school in California, and it will all come back to you. This zine covers the entire semester, which she spends skating, hanging out with new, diverse friends, and dealing with occasional lovesickness. The writing is good; typos and awkward wording are forgivable because there's enough voice behind it to come alive. I'm having trouble trying to describe how cool the illustrations are, but like I said, she's an art major, so just

**MISHAP #22/23, \$3/trade/free to prisoners, 5½" x 8½", photocopied, 64 pgs.**

It's always rough when you've got to review friends' zines. I mean, shit, I've listened to Scandinavian fantasy metal at Ryan's house. I've drank his beer and slept on his couch. And now I've got to review a zine that's already been sitting on my crapper for weeks now. Okay, enough complaining. Onward. As the issue numbers suggest, this one's a double issue—one side being fiction, the other being full of the usual pointed arguments and well thought-out rants that's made up the majority of *Mishap*

**ORGA(NI)SM #2, \$4, 5½" x 8½", copied, 48 pgs.**

Written in English by an Italian currently residing in Japan. Whew—I can hardly hold spit in my mouth and this guy's fluent in at least three languages. Anyway, the theme of this issue is "first contact," and Simone and *Orga(ni)sm*'s few contributors do a great job sticking with the theme while still keeping things interesting. While the majority of it is centered around Japan (things you can do/get for free, people-watching on the train, a history of immigration to the country, etc.), there's also a running, almost unspoken undercurrent of just trying to feel at home in a place that is

loves the underdog. —Craven Rock (Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 1432, Portland, OR 97293, www.microcosmpublishing.com)

**PROFANE EXISTENCE #52/53, \$10, 8½" x 11", newsprint/glossy cover, 162 pgs.**

Holy shit! *Profane Existence* is ten bucks?! When did this happen? I could subscribe to *Thrasher* for a year at that price. I haven't actually seen an issue of *Profane Existence* since the Tower Records in town shut down, and while I remember the nice, glossy cover replacing the newsprint of the earlier issues, I don't remember it being so expensive. As

**"Great concept for a zine: take a "long-lost" hardcore record and just explore the fuck out of it. Find the band members. Interview them."**

—Keith Rosson, *CLENCH* #9

take my word for it. —Lauren Trout (halleyisbatty@gmail.com)

**LOVE IN THE TIME OF SCABIES #3 and #4, \$2, 8½" x 5½", 37 pgs.**

Remember fun? I think I'm going to have to call this a perzine, but it's not "Blah blah, well aren't I not totally boring as I adjust my monocle?" There's a plethora of content, ranging from stories, games, comics, self help, and band interviews with dudes like Get Rad and Party Garbage. It comes off as a large group effort between friends, because, well, that's pretty much what it is, and it rules. I liked this so much I asked to submit stuff to it (OH SHIT, ZINE NERD PAYOLA). —Joe Evans III (2919 N. Buffum, Milwaukee, WI 53212)

**MAXIMUMROCKNROLL #298, \$4, 8 1/2" x 11", newsprint, 144 pgs.**

Ah, good ol' *Maximumrocknroll*, it's been a while. I don't think I've bought an issue of this thing in a year or two. I've also never read as much of the zine as I should; I usually bought it for the record reviews. This time I sat down and tried to blaze through the whole thing. I got about a quarter of the way through and started my usual skimming. The usual columns are in here, with Mantooth's cold and lonely tale definitely standing out. There are a couple of interviews, including one with Isa Chandra Moskowitz, host of a vegan cable-access cooking show, some scene reports (especially Copenhagen's) and a shitload of reviews. Also, I should note that Golnar is no longer coordinating for the zine, which is probably old news at this point. I'm not sure if this is a good thing or a bad thing, but my guess is that it'll continue being the same old infamous rag it's always been. —Will Kwiatkowski (*Maximumrocknroll*, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146-0760)

back issues. Ryan's fiction in here was surprisingly accessible, if a bit too short (he claims that just means they're "self-contained.") On the flipside, there are the usual discussions about sustainability, anarchism, environmental and social responsibility—and "usual" doesn't mean "boring" here. The guy's always struck me as someone who relentlessly questions himself and his surroundings, his impact, and it's that kind of reflection that translates into a great political zine with an approachable, humble side. Nice work. —Keith Rosson (*Mishap*, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405)

**OH NO! THE ROBOT #9, \$2, 5½" x 8", photocopied, 18 pgs.**

Chris Morin writes better stories than I could ever hope to. He tells the tale of his life (or his character's) falling apart through the maniacal work of his double who is the one not paying bills and seeking to make-up with ex-girlfriends. Eviction parties, living with cats, getting a broken nose, and exchanges with friends are all splayed into the story. The way Chris tells the tale, however, is such that it drips with a nihilistic, existential coating. It focuses on everyday experiences and makes them the entire universe for the course of the zine. It's a really interesting read, taking parts that are certainly a la *Burn Collector* but masking them in what seems to be a little more fiction. But the thing is that one can't really tell if the zine is about Morin or some character of his. It hides itself fairly well. And in the end, nothing seems to be resolved. But for someone like me who is drowning in my own deficiencies, this suits me just fine. —Kurt Morris (ohnotherobot@hotmail.com)

very, very different from what you're used to. That's what makes this thing such a captivating read. While there's nothing explicitly "punk" about this, the writing and content transcends that—it's a pretty consuming zine, put together by the same guy that does *Call And Response*. —Keith Rosson (Gianni Simone, 3-3-23 Nagatsuta, Midori-ku, Yokohama-shi, 226-0027 Kanagawa-ken, Japan)

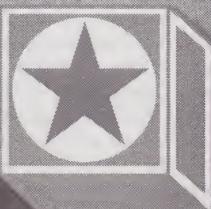
**PERFECT MIX TAPE, THE #4: A MONTH ON THE ROAD WITH A HUNDRED DOLLARS AND A T-SHIRT, \$1.50, Quarter-size, offset?, 30 pgs.** This issue of *Mix Tape* is a tour diary of a zine reading tour that the author, Joe, did all over the country. In the intro it says, "I showed the half finished draft to lots of different people. The verdict was either that it was boring and I should trim down the length of it or just shouldn't publish an account of thirty days of various meals." He goes on to say that he wanted to publish something from all of the writing that he did and that he tried to cut it down to something that would inspire more zine tours instead of "a tour diary of where we ate and shat." Unfortunately, it is pretty dull and does come off as a play by play account of a tour. The folks who he meets and even tours with are just flat first names who one never really gets to know. Besides the usual tour ups and downs, not much happens. Tour diaries are hardly ever very interesting, though. If his intention was to promote zine tours, it would be much more interesting to read some essays or something on why zines are still relevant in this computer age. Or maybe the frustrations of still being passionate about something many believe to be archaic, because zines still rule and everybody

for content, this issue starts out with a large amount of coverage of the riots in Copenhagen over the invasion and destruction of the Ungdomshuset, which is an interesting and generally disheartening story. Then comes tons of interviews, a Japan tour diary from the band See You In Hell, some anti-Bush content (complete with poetry), columns, and record/zine reviews. The highlight of this issue is actually the two CDs loaded to the brim with crusty hardcore and punk. There's nothing better than a good zine with a great comp included (remember *Suburban Voice*, anyone?), and two great CDs are even better. I'd recommend *Profane Existence* to anyone who has ten dollars to spare and wants to generally be angrier. —Will Kwiatkowski (*Profane Existence*, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408)

**PREVAILING NONSENSE #1, SASE, 7" x 8 ½", copied, 20 pgs.**

"Expectations are okay in moderation," the cover warns us wisely. I was looking forward to reading this zine after flipping through it and noticing the excellent illustrations and a couple cute comics and quotes. So I was pretty thrown off when I realized that the first few pages are about "How to cut off your own finger," and there are instructions on how to use a penis vacuum on another page—eww! You'll dig *Pervading Nonsense* #1 if you're the kind of gross teenage boy who likes to do coke and make jokes about anal sex. For the rest of you, well, it's got a couple of endearing moments and it's free, so it's your call. —Lauren Trout (5225 St. Hubbert #7, Montreal, QC, H2J 2Y2, Canada)

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**PUNK ROCK CONFIDENTIAL**  
#11, \$3.95, *Glossy, 8" x 10", 100 pgs.*  
A tabloid about punk. Laid out like the *National Enquirer*, with stories on what Douche Inaband wore at Warped Tour this year. It's an easy read that comes off as all too serious—not a parody of the commoditization of punk culture, but a byproduct of the commoditization of punk culture, complete with photos of their MySpace friends wearing the latest punk fashions (Well hack my legs off at the knee and call me "Stumpy," because Roger Miret has a fucking streetwear company!). Quote Dillinger 4: "I'd love to sneer at the camera for your revolution, but I just can't afford the fucking costume." —CT Terry (Punk Rock Confidential, 236 West Portal Ave. Ste. 134, San Francisco, CA 94127)

**SCENE NOT HERD #1,**  
\$4, *Photocopied with an offset cover, 8½" x 11", 44 pgs.*  
Hey doofuses, if you're gonna drop on a slick zine cover, spend some time laying it out and make sure that people can read your fucking address! I had to Google your zine to find the mailing address. That said, I enjoyed this collaboration between a couple of self-described jaded scenesters from Washington and Michigan. They interview some veteran bands, discuss what keeps these folks hammering it out years down the line,

and they throw in a couple of columns about "kids these days and their Hot Topics." It's a solid effort if you're prepared to read the zine equivalent of the older guy who shows up at every local show and stands in the corner chugging beer and fussing about how much better MTX was back when they had Jon Von. Comes with a mix CD that belongs in your changer right next to the Snakepit comp. —CT Terry (Eric Hazen, 1623 8th Ave. Apt. 2, Longview, WA 98632)

#### SOMNAMBULIST #9, \$3, 5 ½" x 8", photocopied, 2 pgs.

This issue of *Somnambulist* primarily deals with Martha's health issues, including the stress of working on her feet all day in a deli. She visits a couple of doctors to figure out what is wrong with her and also shares some stories not related entirely to the subject. They include a conversation with Peter Bauer and a story about a very strange guy in her life. There is also a piece by her friend Kyle. I really like the cover art of a little girl chewing on a handgun and the layout is simple but it works for me. It's an interesting read with many parts coming across as *Burn Collector*-esque. Not bad, not bad. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 14871, Portland, OR 97293)

**SUN NUZ ZUN, Summer 2007,**  
\$5, 8 ½" x 7", photocopied, 8 pgs.  
Eight pages of damaged photocopy

and illustration artwork. You can't deny that cutting, pasting, taping, and photocopying stuff is fun, and I'm sure all the people involved in this had a good time making this zine, but I imagine that people who don't enjoy creating that kind of art would want anything to do with these pages. —Daryl (PO Box 7302, Olympia, WA 98507)

#### UPHEAVAL #11,

\$1 or trade, 11" x 17", two-sided

Do we still use the term "gutterpunk"? If so, is it a badge of honor or a pejorative appellation these days? Regardless, that's the term that bangs through my brain trying to assess the general nature of the content of *Upheaval*, and I use it in the best possible sense of the word: pictures of various flyers, reviews of records, and hardcore, hardcore, hardcore. I like getting exposure to bands that I would never know about otherwise, but one of the reasons that some years back I grew disinterested in the ultra-core is 'cause I felt like it was all the same clichés over and over again. Still, this guy presents some pretty lucid reviews and I plan on checking out a few of the records that he lauds herein. For that, my boring old ass hoists a cool one in honor of *Upheaval* [slurping of beer]. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Craig, PO Box 301426, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130) .

#### WILDERNESS SURVIVAL HANDBOOK, 1 stamp + a letter, 4" x 5", photocopied, 16 pgs.

Here we have an instantly lovable zine for anyone who appreciates non sequitur irony and deadpan humor. The inside cover of the *Wilderness Survival Handbook* assures you that it won't improve your chances of survival, but I would find it useful for entertainment while waiting to be rescued. —Lauren Trout (1719 Live Oak #C, Houston, TX 77003)

#### ZISK #14, \$2, photocopied, 7" x 8 ½", 36 pgs.

"The Baseball Magazine for People Who Hate Baseball Magazines." Writers editorialize on current goings on in the game and give personal accounts of seeing favorite teams play. This is the "Rockers Who Like Baseball" issue, and Rush, The Hoodoo Gurus, and punk mainstays Guster are all featured. The folks at *Zisk* are working hard at something that they care about, and I hope that it continues to be worth their while, because this zine is all about whistling while you work at a labor of love. Finally, this reviewer would like to submit a request for more photos of players from the '70s with huge 'fros stuffed under their caps. —CT "Yankees Suck" Terry (801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509)

Hundreds more zine reviews can be found at: [www.razorcake.org](http://www.razorcake.org)



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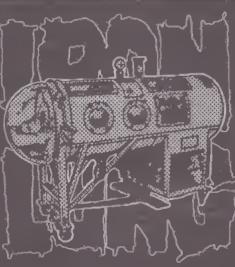
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  - 23 - GAINESVILLE, FL @ WAYWARD COUNCIL W/ RELIGIOUS AS FUCK
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  - 27 - SAVANNAH, GA
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  - 29 - RICHMOND, VA
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  - 2 - NEW YORK, NY
  - 3 - NEW YORK, NY
  - 4 - BOSTON, MA W/ SCAPEGOAT, MEN'S INTEREST, MIND ERASER
  - 5 - PROVIDENCE, RI @ AS220
  - 6 - PITTSBURGH, PA
  - 7 - MILWAUKEE, WI (EARLY)
  - 7 - MILWAUKEE, WI (LATE) @ CACTUS CLUB W/ MALACHI
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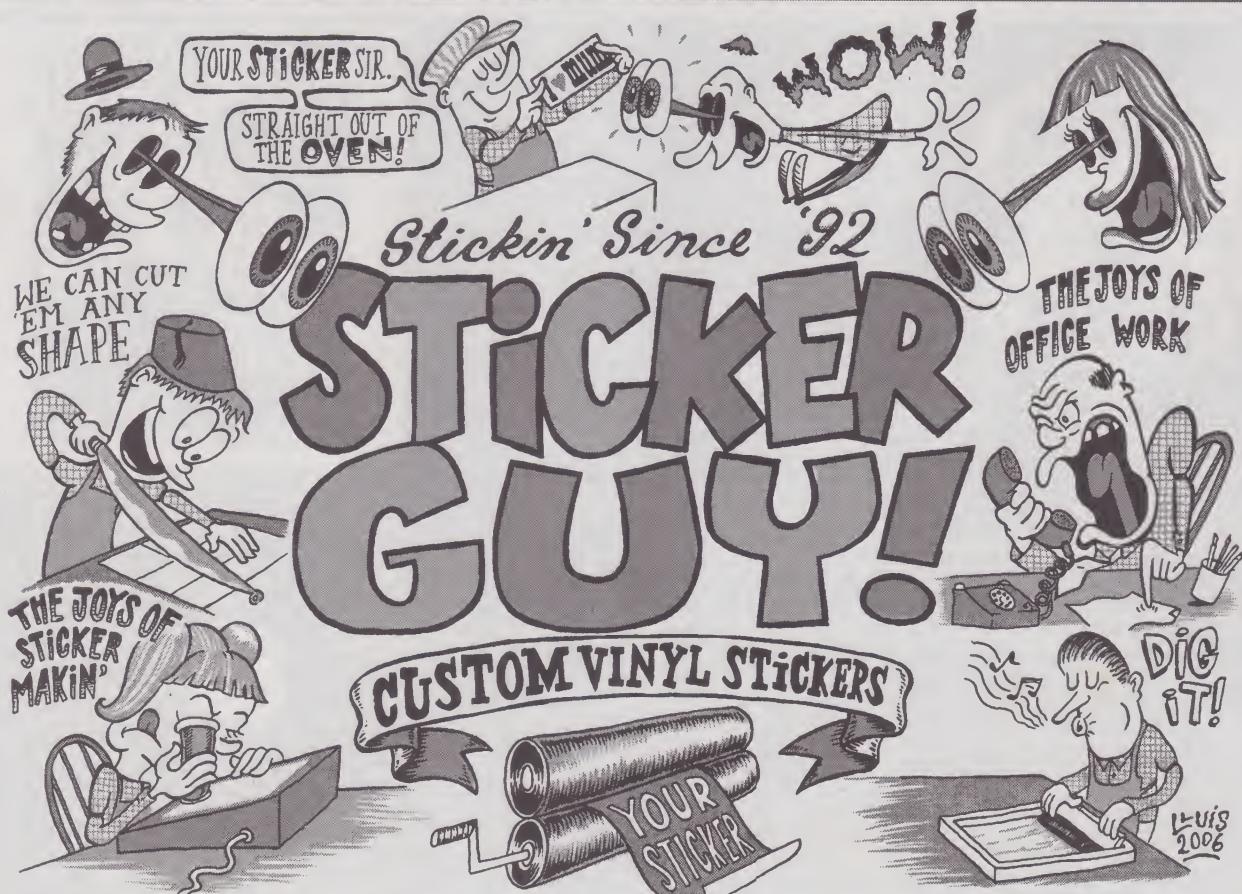
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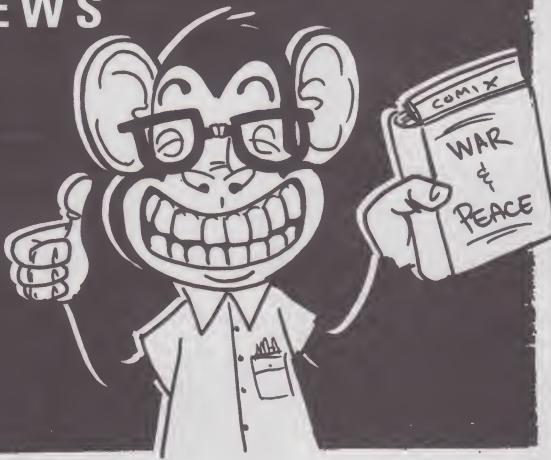
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# BOOK REVIEWS



**All Your Ears Can Hear**  
(Underground Music in Victoria, BC 1978-1984)  
By Jason Flower, Kev Smith, Rick Long, 79 pgs.

When punk rock sprung out from under its slimy rock in the late '70s, its influence was far reaching. Even in a secluded Island town in Canada, the punks would have their say.

This is a colossal undertaking, to say the least. The authors have pretty much turned up anything and everything that could be considered "underground music" in the city of Victoria in those early, formative years of punk rock and the DIY aesthetic. The result is breathtaking. Flipping through the book, the first thing that grabs you is the pictures. So many photos, flyers, and setlists litter the pages. The energy jumping out at you conveys the urgency and fun that were cornerstones to the underground music scene. Then you notice that there are words smattered about around these amazing pictures. Everything is laid out band by band, with first and secondhand stories and memories. You truly feel what it was like to be a part of the action.

This in itself would make for a great document of the early punk rock scene

**Todd:** What do you base your New Years Resolutions on?

**Ben:** This year's was to completely stick to the Gremlin Diet for a year. The Gremlin Diet is when you don't eat after midnight. I haven't completely stuck to it, but I'm doing pretty good.

**Todd:** What ever happened to being featured in *GQ*?

**Ben:** It ended up being two sentences about me at the bottom of an editorial. It compared me to Bono of U2, for some reason.

**Todd:** What are the two largest phone bills you've ever wracked up?

**Ben:** Back in the days before the internet, when you booked a tour you had to do it over the phone. This was also in the days before cell phones and everyone having free long distance. A few people had scams going, like those dialers you could use on payphones that would make the sound of a quarter so you could talk for free. The scam I had was to run up a huge phone bill in my name to book the tour, then just never paying it. Now I can't get a phone in my name anymore, but it was a good tour.

**Todd:** Name something you're no good at when you're high.

**Ben:** When I'm high, I become a really bad backseat driver. I'll always freak out like we're going to hit everything or tell the driver where to go or how to do it. It's really annoying.

**Todd:** Why do you draw so many skeletons when you're stoned?

**Ben:** A lot of times I'll just draw whatever's around me, and I have a lot of rubber skeletons hanging around my desk.

**Todd:** Best idea you've come up with when you're high?

**Ben:** Probably the idea to draw a daily comic strip.

**Todd:** What's the pants-crapping count at now?

**Ben:** It's been awhile. I've actually laid off the sauce for a bit. I still drink a beer every now and then, but not nearly as much as I used to. I'm sure I'll get all shithammered at The Fest, but that's just once a year.

**Todd:** Since you've worked video stores for so long, got some film recommendations?

**Ben:** *Der Todesking*, directed by Jorg Buttgereit. He's the guy that did *Nekromantik*. Also *Tribulation 99*, directed by Craig Baldwin. There are tons of them. *The Corndog Man*, *The Bride of Frank*, *Jerkbeast*, I could go on and on...

**Todd:** Now that you're retired from record reviewing, name a band that broke your back that you had to review.

**Ben:** Man, this band Deathcycle. I think you featured a quote from that review. It was very heavily influenced by Tragedy, and I wrote that. The dude from the band wrote me an email and said it was a lazy review and that they didn't sound like Tragedy. But they sure sounded like Tragedy to me.

**Todd:** Snakepit tubes down rivers and swims in hotel pools at night, why no singing in the shower panels?

**Ben:** I think I've drawn myself in the shower maybe twice. I usually don't do it 'cause I wanna spare my readers the nudity.

## "We need to stay with NICE PEOPLE! CLEAN PEOPLE!"

in Victoria, but it's not over yet. Far from it. Included with the book are two CDs featuring over seventy-nine minutes of (predominately unreleased) music from all of the bands included in the book! There are tracks from some of the bands that people from elsewhere may have heard of such as Nomeansno, Dayglo Abortions, and The Neos. There are some that are well known in collector circles and by punk rock know-it-alls such as the Infamous Scientists, Red Tide, Jerk Ward, and House of Commons, and there are many that have never really seen the light of day until now.

I have been part of the Victoria punk rock scene for a long time now, and I've always taken great pride in my city and the bands that it has produced. The funny thing is that after having read this book, I've realized that I've barely scratched the surface when it comes to local punk rock history. The book and music does not only cater to someone who is from here at all. I would recommend it to anyone into punk history. -Ty Stranglehold (75 Front St., Victoria, BC, Canada V9A 3Y3, [www.allyourearscanhear.com](http://www.allyourearscanhear.com))

**My Life in a Jugular Vein**  
By Ben Snakepit, 288 pgs.

Ben Snakepit has a new book out, *My Life in a Jugular Vein*. It's three more years of daily DIY punk life, three comic panels for every day of the year. It comes with a CD, too. We didn't put this book out, (we put out the first) I know Ben really well, and we decided just to talk instead of writing a review that'd make us both feel real uncomfortable and weird.

**Todd Taylor:** Ever go back over a year of your comics and do self-analysis?

**Ben Snakepit:** Oh yeah, I do it all the time. I might claim that I'm "checking my work," but in reality I'm just making sure my life stays balanced.

**Todd:** Is a fair critique that *Snakepit* is like *Peanuts*, except the kids are really arrested-development punks?

**Ben:** I'd like it to be, but in all honesty, it's not that much like *Peanuts*. In *Peanuts*, there are lots of very well-developed characters, and in my comic it's just me, with only the occasional bit of dialog from other people.

**Todd:** What is N.P.C.P.—the letters on a box on the cover illustration of your book?

**Ben:** That's actually a great story. I was on tour with J Church. This was when we were a four piece. The lead guitar player was my good friend David. He was a really great guitarist, a great guy, totally cool, but he wasn't very good at adapting to the touring lifestyle. He wasn't a big fan of sleeping on floors—he brought a fold-up cot with him—or dirty punk houses. He had to shower every day. You know the type. A really good dude but just not cut out for living that way.

Anyway, we were in Pittsburgh and we were staying with a friend of a friend, and it was a pretty gross punk house in a kinda shitty neighborhood. David opted to sleep in the van that night. At one point I went out to the van to get my backpack or something, and David was awake. We started shooting the shit and David goes: "Dude, we really need to start sleeping in better places. I can't take much more of this." He started getting really upset, like on the verge of tears. "We need to stay with NICE PEOPLE! CLEAN PEOPLE!" He kinda lost his shit and it was actually pretty funny. From then on, whenever we got a particularly sweet place to stay, like a place with a bed or some nice carpet, we called it an "N.P.C.P. night."

**Todd:** Ever been totally fuckin' weirded out that people can see what you've done for the last six years, every single day? Has anyone's behavior made you double-think you should do what you do?

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**Ben:** Totally, all the time. I actually have a little reminder sticker on my desk that says "What you *don't* say is just as important as what you *do* say." I'll always be totally honest in my comics, but I'm starting to learn what issues I can lightly skirt over and end up avoiding lots of trouble later on down the road.

**Todd:** Artistically, what's your next small goal for *Snakepit*?

**Ben:** I've been experimenting with different angles—it's hard to describe—and the comics I'm drawing right now probably won't get published for a long time, so it's kinda hard to explain what I mean.

(Microcosm East, 222 S. Rogers St., Bloomington, IN 47404. Microcosm West, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293)

#### Paping: The Teacher's Edition

By John Mejias, 80 pgs.

God, this thing is wonderful. Absolutely awesome. See also: hilarious, admirable, moving, aesthetically stunning, but mostly, yeah, just straight-up awesome. Mejias is an elementary school art teacher working in the Brooklyn public school system. *Paping* is a collection of the first eight issues of his zine of the same name. And it's just stunning, all across the board. Visually, it's incredible—silk-screened covers, inner pages beautifully offset in blue

It's a beautiful book, in full color. The graphics leap off the page at you. If you're at all familiar with them, you'll instantly be taken back to a time in your life when you were younger and standing at the top of a half pipe waiting to drop in or flipping through an old issue of *Thrasher*, only this time without your fingertips getting all black.... The pictures throw you into such a nostalgic daze that you almost forget that there is some writing there too...lots of it. There are stories behind many famous graphics, as well as tales from the fabled Phillips Studios and firsthand accounts from many of the young artists who got their start working for Jim. As much as I love all of Jim's past work, one of the best parts of this book is the inclusion of his stellar return to the skate world after so many years out of the game. He is cranking out some killer stuff and it rounds out the book nicely. This is absolutely a must have for any skater, artist...hell, everyone should have this! —Ty Stranglehold (Schiffer Books, 4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310)

#### They Could Have Been Bigger Than EMI: A Discography of Now Defunct Independent Record Labels That Released Vinyl, Second Edition

By Joachim Gaertner, 567 pgs.

With respect to my own lot in life—a writer who loves punk rock—no matter what anybody writes about punk rock, it will never eclipse the music itself.

## Lip-syncing to Bad Religion in high school! Egads!

ink, gorgeous halftones. The best part is that while Mejias occasionally incorporates collage or what looks like linocuts in his work, for the most, part his drawing style (which is fully-realized and absolutely consistent) is comparable to Picasso—if the guy'd grown up on a heavy diet of underground comics and Los Crudos. Just the way he draws people is innately crazed and weird looking—it's a joy to look at—and when you couple that with the fact that half the time he's drawing his students, who say awesome things like, "That President. I never met anyone like that," and "I made up a good song: Sexa bexa sexacha. Gimme money," it's just hilarious. For lack of a better reference, it could be comparable to Dave Roche's *On Subbing* zine—there are so many similarities: struggling with the balance between trying to do right by students within an intrinsically fucked administrative framework that relies heavy on outmoded and ineffective test scores. The difference is that *Paping* is presented within a visual medium, but with both zines, the dedication, commitment, and care about the kids they work with is just so apparent. Anyone interested in education should grab this up for the times when inspiration may be getting lean (as well as the fact that these are, at their core, wonderful stories), and fans of comic zines should also consider taking this one home, because Mejias' art is really spectacular and wholly individual. *Paping* is just a flat-out beautiful piece of work. —Keith Rosson (*Paping*, 60 St. Marks Place Apt. 4, NY, NY 10003)

#### Side A: The Music Lover's Graphic Novel

Edited by Rachel Dukes, 136 pgs.

The premise to *Side A* is really great: a graphic novel featuring a diverse group of comic artists, all penning works about their introduction to or love of music. While I was familiar with very few of the artists—consider that a testament to my ignorance—it doesn't reflect on the quality of stuff contained within. Actually, considering the diversity of styles and approaches presented here, *Side A*'s of a pretty consistent caliber, both in the storytelling and visual presentations. Regular *Cake* readers will of course be familiar with Ben Snakepit (and his "Is it the Dead Milkmen? Or is it Cryptic Slaughter?" comic here is awesome, by the way), but there are also some really great pieces by Arbee Chapnik (lip-syncing to Bad Religion in high school! Egads!), Lawrence Gullo, Sara Shay and Corey Marie Parkhill, Liz Greenfield, Rachel Dukes, and Mara and Sam Merwin. Overall, it was also really interesting to see just how many people found themselves "into" music after hearing Nirvana—though that's by no means, or even close, to the foundation of many of these comics. All in all, it's a nice, diverse piece of work. Comes with the *Winter Bloo* split 7". —Keith Rosson (*Poseur Ink*, 7322 Mesa College Dr. #12, San Diego, CA 92111)

#### Skateboard Art of Jim Phillips, The

By Jim Phillips 208 pgs.

Anyone who has had anything to do with skateboarding in the '80s will instantly recognize the artwork of Jim Phillips. His cartoonish monsters and gore almost define an entire era. From Screaming Hand all the way back to the earliest Santa Cruz Skateboards logo, Jim was there.

While his last book (*Surf, Skate & Rock Art of Jim Phillips*), told Jim's life story and featured all of his artistic endeavors, this volume focuses strictly on his work in the skateboard world and collects every single piece of artwork that he ever did for a skateboard company.

Vinyl is the lifeblood of punk. It's its monetary, artistic, and psychic currency. Something doesn't "really exist" in punk if it's never been released on vinyl. That's just the facts. The other fact is that some German punks have great databasing, cataloging, and organizational skills. This book, in accompaniment with the *Flex!* book, are exhaustive, itemized (alphabetically) lists that any punk historian shouldn't be without. This book is 567 pages of names of labels, graphics from covers, and a list of each piece of vinyl released by every label between 007 Records and Zyzzyve Records, along with the release date. If you're looking for narrative or a critique of the music, look elsewhere. If you're looking to find out what, say, Rabid Cat Records put out in 1984 and what the matrix number of the record is—or any information on tens of thousands of releases that are scattered far and wide on the internet (if even that)—this is the tome for you. A cross-referencing punk's delight. —Todd (Pure Pop For Now People. Order directly from Joachim: purepop@buissnet.com)

#### Voices in Wartime Anthology

Edited by Andrew Himes, et al., 244 pgs.

*Voices in Wartime Anthology* is one of the more compelling books that I've read recently, and one that has a level of importance for every citizen of this country, if not for every member of the human race. The text itself is a collection of narratives and poems based on Himes' documentary of the same name, drawing upon the words and voices of poets, soldiers, physicians, journalists, activists, scholars, and survivors, all witnesses first-hand or after the fact to the permeating devastation that human warfare inflicts on both societies and individuals. What they present is not pretty; in fact what these people have to say is purposefully ugly so that those of us who have had the luck and the luxury never to be in a war zone can achieve a level of understanding, however meager, of just how searingly traumatic such experiences can be.

However, it should be pointed out that in absolutely no way, shape, or form does *Voices in Wartime* read as an anti-war tome. That is not the purpose of the text. No judgments are offered regarding the moral or ethical motivations for war. There is an underlying assumption throughout the book that wars can, do, and will happen, if for no other reason than that it's a part of the human cultural construct. The purpose of this text is simply to show the reader what war is really all about—it is not glory, it is not victory. Rather, war is pain, blood, and fear—the physical and mental mangling of human beauty. At no point in this book are there any overt (socio-)political statements regarding war, not even by American veterans of the current war in Iraq or the survivors of American intervention in that country. This book is not concerned with politics, it is only concerned with tearing down the illusions regarding the actual conduct and effects of warfare that are created to render it palatable and excusable for those of us that have never seen it. If I may paraphrase Camus, he wrote in *The Rebel* that one of the reasons that society is becoming more violent is that the blood of the victims is not on the hands of the entire social group. His point is that if human suffering and the responsibility for bloodshed is diffused throughout the group, then the individuals in that group will be less likely to engage in violence. Brian Turner's poem "2000 lbs." splattered that blood all over me, broke me apart, and left me a sobbing, shaking mess; never has this reviewer read a piece that was simultaneously so beautiful, terrible, and troubling. This is one of the primary effects of this text—the reader, however distant he or she may be from the carnage of the war zone, senses a level of culpability just by being human.

The purpose of this text is simply to show the reader what war is really all about—it is not glory, it is not victory. Rather, war is pain, blood, and fear—the physical and mental mangling of human beauty.

Finally, in his narrative contribution, editor Andrew Himes offers what I believe to be the most important point of the book: "I have a history as a fool, and an arrogant one. My foolishness was not to oppose the [Vietnam] war, but to oppose the warrior. My arrogance was to imagine that I had a lock on truth, justice, and morality, and that my motives were clean and pure, while those of my opponents were racist, violent, and morally contaminated" (p. 225). This, I believe, is the fundamental truth of both Himes' documentary and this, the accompanying text; we may oppose or support war based on moral, ethical, or ideological grounds, but unless we understand what war actually involves and what the survivors experience, be they combatants or civilians, we're little more than blustering bags of ignorance. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Whit Press, [www.whitpress.org](http://www.whitpress.org))

#### Zinester's Guide to Portland, The Edited by Shawn Granton 129 pgs.

This book is cute and full of great illustrations. It will definitely provide the zinester with plenty of things to do in Portland, Oregon. It definitely serves as a hip, cool, Portland version of a *Lonely Planet* guide. A lot of effort has been put into it. And I'm sure that it definitely serves a purpose to the Bohemian masses that come into or already live in Portland and find themselves screaming at the overcast sky, "What the hell am I going to do with myself?"

That said, I'm trying to simply review this book and don't want to go into a critique of zinesters, but I'm finding it hard not to do so, because it seems necessary. So please allow me some room to break it down. I am not a fan of zinester culture at all (but I love zines and self-publishing; I find them to be distinctly different). Zinesters tend to be the type of folks who like to throw

around the term "zine community" and fetishize the medium itself; rather than being obsessed writers, illustrators, journalists, and journalers or whoever that make zines because it is an available medium. Meanwhile, they've placed strict controls (both consciously and indirectly) on the content of what the "zine community" is all about and take it for granted as being universal to everybody who does zines. These things usually revolve around vegan food, bikes, coffee, and the like. They thrive in a city like Portland, which encourages such behavior and passes it to the über-cool in a locally made basket, but is often stifling to anybody else.

Allow me to refer to a review of this book I found online on the publisher's website: "*Portland, Oregon is one of my favorite cities. First of all, it's hipper than anywhere, and that includes San Francisco and Paris, France. Trust me, Portland is hipper than both. It's got more cool anarcho-purple haired mellow stoner smash-the-state people running their own companies out of their bedrooms than any berg in the Universe.*" This is the type of person that this guide is intended for, people who love having everything handed to them and can appreciate a town that is overly cool and provides it to them with the barest minimum of struggle. Now there's a book for them. And, oh, the choices they'll have.

For the rest of y'all, like those who like to seek out their own secret places and make their own fun or the punks who have trouble doing what everybody else is doing, this book isn't really necessary. Nor is Portland for that matter. —Craven Rock (Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293, [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com))

Many more book reviews can be found at [www.razorcake.org](http://www.razorcake.org).

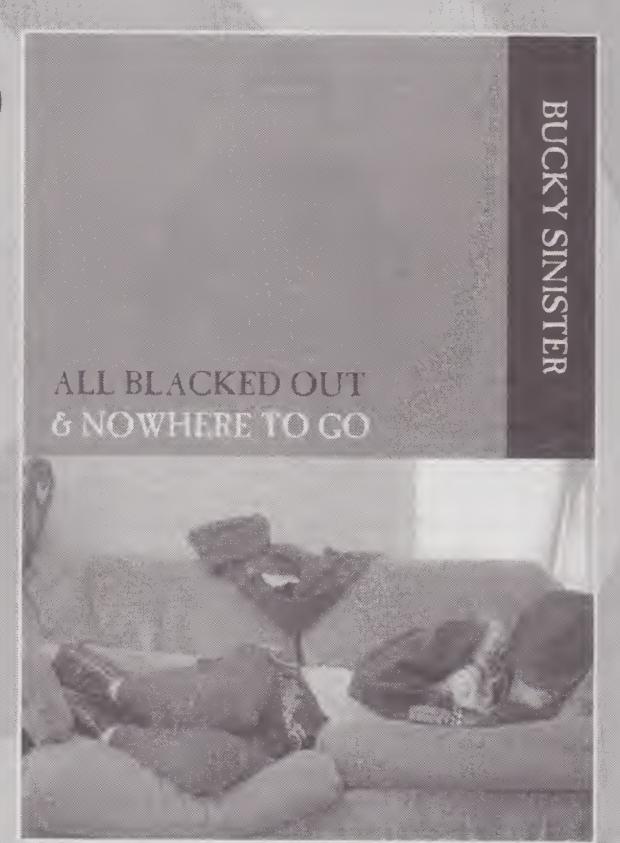


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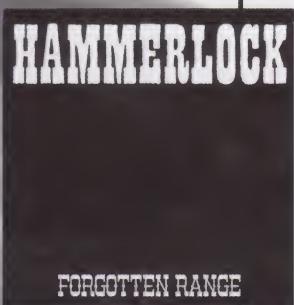
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